



Course Descriptions 2022-2023

Middle School Expedition Courses

Final Frontier (all grades, science and humanities)

Gazing at the stars with curiosity is a fundamental part of the human experience. During this course, students will have a chance to explore that curiosity through a collection of case studies, reading, writing, research projects, and design challenges from both a humanities and a science perspective. This collaborative expedition will familiarize students with the earth's formation as well as with a fundamental understanding of the universe and our galaxy. This will be partially accomplished through the study of geology and the history of human exploration of space. Students will have the opportunity to view the galaxies through many lenses; from the telescope to science fiction, and many stops in between.

Home (6th grade)

The term ecology derives from Greek roots meaning the study of home. In this course, students will do just that: investigate both the living and nonliving factors of their home environment. This expedition will integrate literature, history, and social studies with environmental and life science to answer the essential question, *What is a home?* Students will embark on a variety of challenging readings, discussions, and projects in addition to doing fieldwork and individual reflections throughout the trimester, all while building executive functioning skills and the habits that will support them throughout middle school. Students will unravel the concept of “home” and the natural world. They will investigate the ecology of different biomes and the concept of adaptation. In addition, students will explore human needs and desires when it comes to the dwellings they inhabit. Students will unpack the economic factors that influence housing and will explore the issues of homelessness and affordable living locally. Students will explore themes of home in both fiction and nonfiction texts and express what they’ve learned through creative, expository, and research writing.

Belonging (6th grade)

This is a course on why humans have the urge for belonging and how they can fulfill that in the healthiest way possible. Students will learn about various groups in our society that have been marginalized and struggled to find the place where they belong. Students will also practice introspection while examining where and how they fit into belonging to our Watershed Community. There is a high correlation between individuals feeling a sense of belonging and success in the classroom, school, and community. People who feel like they belong have positive academic attitudes, greater motivation, strong social connections, high levels of engagement and participation, make better decisions, have more compassion, and experience increased achievement. This class will focus on students finding where they belong at Watershed and helping others feel a sense of belonging as well.

Fire and Fuel (6th/7th grade)

The last several years have brought a slew of record-breaking fires. In 2020 alone, wildfires burned over 27 million acres across Australia and over 4% of California's land mass (NPR). Colorado had its three largest fires in history, each one outdoing the previous. Just this last year, we saw the devastation of the Marshall Fire in our own community. Fire is nothing new to these environments, though. In fact, many of the ecosystems found in these places evolved alongside fire and require it to be successful. Why, then, are we seeing more and more extreme fires than ever before? This course will explore the science, culture, and ecology behind fire. From chemical combustion to succession, from Indigenous fire practices to wildland firefighting, we will dive into the many considerations involved in living with the inevitability of fire. We will learn from and work with organizations like the U.S. Forest Service, local fire departments, and more to answer the question, *How can we live with fire?*

The American Dream (6th/7th grade)

This course examines the birth, development, and future of the U.S. political system. In the first part of the term we dive straight into U.S. civics, the construction of the U.S. political system, and the exercise of political power within that system. We will then study social issues, including immigration and race relations, economic disparity, political and social crises, crime, population growth, and the struggle between liberty and security. Students will be challenged to discuss how best to address each of those social issues in a manner that promotes social justice, and continually assess whether the "Dream" is still a reality in modern life.

Food for Thought (7th/8th grade)

Food is forever timely - it fuels our bodies, feeds culture and conversations, and offers solutions to some of our world's greatest challenges. In Food for Thought, students will investigate food sourcing, nutrition, the environmental impacts of agriculture, and food security through a variety of means. Students will develop reading comprehension and writing skills through our anchor text, the *Omnivore's Dilemma (Young Reader's Edition)*; will work to synthesize information from field experiences, Zoom meetings with experts, and relevant films; and will investigate scientific concepts such as climate change, photosynthesis, and macronutrients through various labs and inquiry. Students will work with local food pantries to learn about the issue of food insecurity and what actions can be taken to mitigate it. This course will work in partnership with the humanities course, *Culture on the Plate*.

Culture on the Plate (7th/8th grade)

Food is one of our most basic human needs and has always been part of fueling the human story. But food is about so much more than survival. Food reflects our histories, social and economic statuses, and values. It affects our environment, influences politics, and even shapes the world of TV entertainment. In this class, students will seek out culture on the plate: *What can we learn about ourselves by examining our food? How does food reflect and influence culture and identity? And what's the role of culture in shaping food-- past, present, and future?* Throughout this course, students will conduct research and build relationships with food-based organizations in order to make personal and local connections to the global story of food. This course will work in partnership with the science course, Food for Thought.

Transformations of Thinking and Self (8th grade)

Transformations of Thinking and Self is a course in developmental psychology, metacognition, and brain anatomy. It is designed to give students a deeper understanding of their mental workings while empowering them to learn how to view cognition, emotion, and changes in their bodies and minds as a dynamic process that they can engage in and direct. In a reading-intensive course, students will have the opportunity to explore adolescent development through a variety of lenses and examine current research in neuroscience related to the brain and the implications of this understanding. Students will explore psychological frameworks used to better understand the developing mind and make connections to their own experiences to begin answering the essential question, *who am I?*

The History of Humans (8th grade)

Who are we? Students will approach the question of what it means to be human through the main subfields of anthropology: biology, culture, language, and archaeology. Engaging in fieldwork, students will explore the human past as well as our current shared and diverse cultural experiences. Along the way, they will develop skills in critical inquiry and multiple research methods. *What does it mean to be human?* In pursuing this question, students will view themselves not only as citizens of their local region, but also as global citizens and problem-solvers capable of navigating our complex, multicultural world.

Middle School Skills Courses

Cinema Studies: Animation (Tri 1 & 3)

How has animation changed over time/How has it stayed the same? How do animators learn from trial and error? Students will immerse themselves in the history and craft of animation. Some of the fun things about experiencing animation are the opportunities to not only appreciate the story, but to ask yourself, “How did they do that?” The class will examine multiple modes of animation from early forms that play with the persistence of vision to cinematic styles such as 2D, stop motion, rotoscoping, computer animation, and more. Students will immerse themselves in the history and craft of animation. Our creative exploration will culminate with each student making their own animated short.

Middle School Ceramics (Tri 2)

How do artists work? What role does courage play in revising, refining, and developing work? This course is designed to introduce students to clay and the many forms that can be created through handbuilding. Students will fashion a variety of pots by using forms, making attachments, sculpture, and working with slabs. We will also explore a variety of decorative techniques including texturing, sticker and paper resist, decaling, and painting. Through a variety of projects, students will be challenged to make a collection of functional and artistic creations. Along the way, students will sketch out ideas, document new techniques and information, participate in constructive critique, reflect on their process and finished work, and maintain a digital portfolio page for the course. The course culminates with a student-designed project where they incorporate aspects of their newfound skills into a summative clay creation.

Digital Design 1 & 2 (Tri 1)

From web design, advertising or logo development, each element of digital design harnesses the power of graphic design, user-interface (UI) and user-experience (UX) to curate content for the digital age. Using the wealth of Adobe® products and online software platforms, this class will provide students with the opportunity to learn the tricks of the trade, engage in the digital design process from beginning to end, and fine tune and edit their work in design challenges that will incorporate much of the software and skills used in the digital design career industry. This course will be divided into Digital Design 1 (introduction to Adobe programs) & Digital Design 2 (expanding previous work to focus on UI & UX). Prerequisite for Digital Design 2 is Digital Design 1.

Athletics and Leadership (Tri 1)

Athletics and Leadership challenges students athletically through a variety of individual and group athletic activities and uses both competition and cooperation to strengthen student development of empathy, courage, resilience, collaboration, and group leadership. Enrollment is open to all students, regardless of fitness level, who are eager to be physically active, break a sweat, grow in character, and learn about leadership and working in a group.

Spanish

Watershed students move through levels of proficiency in Spanish starting with middle school basic Spanish through advanced courses in high school. The Watershed Spanish curriculum focuses on helping students to engage in a lifelong experience of becoming bilingual. The Spanish program is a proficiency-based curriculum that enables students to use the second language in real life scenarios in an immersion setting. Through interacting with authentic resources, volunteer opportunities, and exchanges with native speakers, we support students to increase their competence in interpersonal and presentational speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills.

Rhyme and Reason (8th-12th)

How do we spark curiosity and wonder through poetry? This creative writing course will initially study impactful poets throughout history, such as classic writers like Oscar Wilde, to new and upcoming changemakers like Amanda Gorman. While studying their writing, we will also learn how their writing affected the era in which they lived, and the important events that they wrote about—what they meant, and how they emphasized a need for change. While learning about specific techniques from these poets, students will then create their own poems to spark curiosity, change, and wonder within our community.

Math Courses

Students move through seven years of math starting with Math A in the 6th grade. The Watershed mathematics curriculum focuses on helping students develop not just computational fluency but also flexible, robust quantitative reasoning skills. Through projects and real-world mathematics, we support students to increase their mathematical fluency and ability to use math in their day-to-day lives. More and more, future citizens need a flexible understanding of mathematical thinking, with an increased emphasis on data analysis, engineering applications,

and computer science. Beginning in the fall of 2021, most of our math courses are expanded to include a focus on these emerging STEM areas. This enhanced math program allows us to make math more relevant to our students' lives both today and in the future.

Watershed Math Courses

- Math A & Introduction to Data Science
- Math B & Topics in Engineering
- Algebra 1 & Topics in Data Science
- Geometry
- Algebra 2 & Topics in Engineering
- Statistics
- Precalculus
- Calculus

Link to: [2022-2023 High School Course Descriptions](#)
