



NEW
COVENANT
SCHOOLS

COURSE CATALOGUE 2026



NEW COVENANT schools

SCHOOL OF RHETORIC

Dearest School of Rhetoric Community,

A hearty welcome to the catalogue of J-term offerings for January 2026. We invite you, parents and students, to read through all of the course descriptions to get a sense for the range of options available this year. Please do note several important details:

- Review the pre-req/restrictions section to make sure you are eligible, along with the fees section, as some courses do require that.
- The catalogue is organized into three sections: full day, morning, and afternoon.

When reviewing the catalogue, you should rank order your desired choices so that when it comes time to register, you are ready to go. Specifically, you should be ready to list your top 3 choices for the morning and top 3 choices for the afternoon session. Unless you are in one of the categories below, all students will be on campus all day taking two courses—thus we want your top 3 choices for both sessions.

- Rome / Sorrento Trip—For those in this category, you have already chosen your J-term, so please register for this course only.
- Internships- This is a great opportunity for internships! If you have set up an internship you will need to turn in your Internship Intent Form by October 7th and sign up for the internship during registration. However, if it is not full-day, you will go ahead and choose your top 3 courses for the time frame you will be on campus (morning or afternoon) and select the time frame of your internship.
- Vector Space- If you desire to engage in any of the full day options through Vector Space (Blacksmithing or Woodworking), when you get to registration you will select it, but then we will still ask you to rank order your top choices for morning and afternoon. The Vector Space courses have limited space and if you don't get that selection, we will need to know where else to place you.

Finally, registration will occur online during specified windows. Each grade, sequentially, will receive a Microsoft forms link and on that form will select their choices according to what was just specified. Regarding the timing of the registration process:

- Seniors—October 9th
- Juniors—October 16th
- Sophomores—October 23rd
- Freshman—October 30th

As classes fill, we will notify the next group of students and remove those from the choices so that the underclassmen can realign their preferences. As you review these offerings, if you have particular questions about the course content or fees or travel, etc., please direct those to the listed teacher. If you have general questions about the J-term, please send those my way.

Warmly,

Dr. Erin H. Uminn
Principal, School of Rhetoric

ALL-DAY OFFERINGS





NEW
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SCHOOL OF RHETORIC

J-TERM

Rome, the Vatican, Pompeii, & Sorrento

Katie Eldridge, Lukas Stock, Jimmy Kirshberger, & Phaedra Callaway

Description:

The NCS Rome trip gives students the opportunity to explore places covered in their regular curriculum and brings them face-to-face with the wonders of the ancient Romans. Our journey begins with a tour of Rome itself, during which we will visit the Colosseum, Roman Forum, Trevi Fountain, Pantheon, and the Spanish Steps. Next, we will visit the Vatican City and be in awe of the Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's Basilica's vast artwork. We will travel to Pompeii and tour its ruins with a local guide, after which we will see the beauty of Sorrento and Capri. We will finish our journey with additional time in Rome and a hands-on pizza-making class.

Length:

- We will depart on Monday, January 5th and return on Monday, January 12th.

Travel:

- We will travel by bus to and from the airport, travel by airplane to and from Rome, and travel within Italy via bus.

Fees:

- \$4,339 per student participant, \$4,979 per adult participant. Cost includes airfare, transportation within Italy, hotel accommodations, the price of the local guides (minus tipping), price of entry to sights, breakfast and dinner, the hands-on pizza making class, etc.
- Additional fees apply for ground transportation to and from the airport, tipping, traveler's insurance, and faculty chaperones.
- Students will want to bring money for food purchases in airports and for lunches, as well as for souvenirs.
- For entry into Europe, we are required to hold valid passports that will not expire within 6 months of the stated travel time. There is a fee associated with passport renewal if it is necessary.



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SCHOOL OF RHETORIC

J-TERM

Blacksmithing Intensive

At Vector Space, Lynchburg, Mr. Chris Deneen

Description:

This course provides an opportunity for teens to learn beginner and intermediate blacksmithing techniques in an intensive 7 session course. Vector Space is a non-profit makerspace dedicated to hands-on education for teens and adults. Led by retired engineer and blacksmith artist Ken Pritchett, the goals of this course are to ignite a love of making and build confidence in forging steel for each student. Participants will begin by learning important safety concerns and terminology of the blacksmith shop. Throughout the course, students will use the forge, anvil, hammer and various specialty tools to create an artistic blacksmithing project. Students will take their completed project home with them at the end of the program.

Length:

- This course will run on full days, leaving campus at 7:45 a.m. and returning at 2:30 p.m., with an onsite break for packed lunch and water bottle

Travel:

- Students will travel each day to and from Vector Space by NCS bus.

Fees

- The fee for this course is \$350 which covers materials used therein and the on-site instructor.
- All supplies, safety equipment, and materials are provided.

Pre-requisites/Restrictions

- No prior metalworking experience is required.
- Max of 4 students. Min of 3 students needed for this offering.
- Students will receive further instruction on dress code and other considerations once enrolled in the class.
- Students should bring a packed lunch and water bottle with them each day.

Content Outline:

- Tools used during this course will include propane forge, anvil, hammer, vise, tongs and punches. Students should be prepared to spend long hours standing, swinging a hammer, and being physically active during this course.
- The project will consist of a decorative frame and scrollwork that is riveted together. There will be an opportunity for some customization and decision making on the part of the student when creating their project.



NEW
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SCHOOL OF RHETORIC

J-TERM

Woodworking Course

At Vector Space, Lynchburg, Mr. Chris Deneen

Description:

This course provides an opportunity for teens to learn beginner woodworking techniques and flex their creativity for a good cause. Vector Space is a non-profit makerspace dedicated to hands-on education for teens and adults. Led by Vector Space Woodshop Captain Alex Klingen and Vector Space founder Elise Spontarelli, the goals of this course are to ignite a love of making and to build confidence in the wood shop for each student. Participants will begin by learning to read and interpret detailed plans and complete tool safety training. Throughout the course, students will work collaboratively to build a playhouse for Rush Homes Parade of Playhouses. Rush Homes will be on site to share their mission, and students will get to learn about the impact their work has on the community. Students and families will be invited to attend the Parade of Playhouses event in April; additional details to follow.

Length:

- This course will run on full days, leaving campus at 7:45 a.m. and returning at 2:30 p.m., with an onsite break for packed lunch and water bottle

Travel:

- Students will travel each day to and from the Vector Space facility by NCS bus.

Fees

- The fee for this course is \$305 which covers transportation to and from the Vector Space facility, materials used therein and the on-site instructor.
- All supplies, safety equipment, and materials are provided.

Pre-requisites/Restrictions

- No prior woodworking experience is required.
- Max of 8 students. Min of 4 students needed for this offering.
- Students will receive further instruction on dress code and other considerations once enrolled in the class.

Content Outline:

- Tools used during this course will include chop saw, bandsaw, table saw, hand chisel, router table, belt sander, drill, orbital sander, square, clamps, and measuring and marking tools.
- Students will work together to build one large playhouse structure, decorated in a space theme. Plans for the playhouse base will be provided; design and décor decisions will be in the hands of the students.

MORNING OFFERINGS





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J-TERM

Around the World in Seven Dishes

Mrs. Jessica Arango

Description:

Food tells a special story. Food connects us. Food transports us. In this course, we will “travel” to seven different countries through the power of cooking. Not only will students learn essential kitchen skills, but they will also learn about various cultures and their cooking styles. We will first discover the unique qualities of each destination including history, art, and literature. Then we will build a meal around the stories told of the country. We will end each meeting by eating the meal which we have prepared, sharing stories of our own. This course hopes to restore what Michael Pollan describes as a “return to the kitchen to reclaim our lost traditions and to forge a deeper, more meaningful connection to the ingredients and cooking techniques that we use to nourish ourselves.”

Length:

- This course will run on half-days, totaling 21 hours.

Travel:

- None.

Fees:

- There is a \$60 fee for this course.

Pre-requisites/Restrictions

- Food allergies cannot be accommodated.
- Maximum of 10 students in this course.

Content Outline (Menu):

- **Italy:** Fresh pasta, homemade sauce, and tiramisu
- **Morocco:** Falafel, pita, salad, yogurt-dill sauce
- **Mexico:** Fajitas, rice, refried beans, and salad
- **Cuba:** Lechon asado, black beans, rice, and tres leches
- **Greece:** Kebobs, Mediterranean salad, tzatziki
- **England:** Fish and chips; High tea at noon
- **Romania:** Chicken schnitzel, salate de bouef, and salam de biscuiti



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SCHOOL OF RHETORIC J-TERM

Gryphon Design Group

Mr. Mark Hernandez

Description:

Experience the world of graphic design by working on a variety of projects in a simulation design studio—the Gryphon Design Group—during this J-Term session. You will learn to use the design tool Canva to create finished works for print and the web. Each session will begin with learning tips and techniques for executing your projects. Then you'll get to work on your assignments. You'll learn the skill and value of team input and feedback. You'll also benefit from the challenge of creative thinking and technical execution.

Length:

- This course will run on half-days, totaling 21 hours..

Travel:

- None.

Fees:

- None.

Pre-requisites/Restrictions

- NCS student Microsoft account and NCS email.
- Class enrollment maximum is 15.
- Personal laptops are encouraged.

Content Outline:

- Canva orientation and practice.
- Visual brainstorming techniques and skills.
- Proposed project types:
 - Infographic design
 - Web page design
 - Map design
 - Package design



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SCHOOL OF RHETORIC

J-TERM

"The 99% Invisible" Lynchburg

Mrs. Brandi Marchant

Description:

The Cambridge Dictionary defines the *built environment* as "the parts of the places in which we live that have been built by people." How much do you really know about the built environment around us in Lynchburg? What interesting things might be right before your eyes everyday that you don't really see?

In the introduction to *The 99% Invisible City: A Field Guide to the Hidden World of Everyday Design*, authors Roman Mars and Kurt Kohlstedt provide a preview of the richness we can uncover just by taking a closer look: "The truth is that the mundane objects we pass by without noticing or trip over without thinking can represent as much genius and innovation as the tallest building, the longest bridge, or the most manicured park. . . the more fascinating stories of the built world are about problem-solving, historical constraints, and human drama."

Using *The 99% Invisible City* as our guidebook, this course proposes to open students' eyes to the often overlooked, but surprisingly intriguing, features in the built environment, paying special attention to examples in our own city. Together we will explore "The 99% Invisible" Lynchburg using historical and current writings, images, and artifacts to see our city in a new way.

Length:

- This course will run on half-days, totaling 21 hours.

Travel:

- None.

Fees:

- There is a \$10 fee for this course.

Pre-requisites/Restrictions

- None

Content Outline (Themes):

- The Inconspicuous and the Conspicuous
- Infrastructure: Water, Power, and Communication
- Infrastructure: Transportation
- Architecture
- Geography



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Go Into the Desert

Mr. Kevin Rhea

Description:

“Go into the desert not to escape other men, but in order to find them in God”- Thomas Merton. This course will examine the Desert Fathers in the third century AD. These early monastics devoted themselves to a life of prayer, poverty, and self-denial. The Desert Fathers had a profound influence on Christian monasticism and spirituality. This influence can be seen in the Rule of St. Benedict and the Hesychast tradition of the Eastern Church. By learning about the lives of these monastics and reading their sayings from The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks, we will see how the call to the desert applies today.

Length:

- This course will run on half-days, totaling 21 hours.

Travel:

- None.

Fees:

- \$15

Pre-requisites/Restrictions

- Maximum of 18 students in this course.

Content Outline:

- Introduction to the Desert Fathers
 - Begin with a review of the history leading up to the desert fathers. Also, learn about key themes in their writing and their influence.
- The first Desert Father: St. Paul of Thebes
 - We will learn about the first desert father St. Paul of Thebes and examine the events that lead him to the desert and his life in the desert.
- The Father of Monks: St. Anthony the Great
 - Overview of the life of St. Anthony the Great and readings from St. Athanasius St. Antony of the Desert.
- Desert Mothers: St. Syncletica of Alexandria and St. Mary of Egypt

AFTERNOON OFFERINGS





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SCHOOL OF RHETORIC
J-TERM

Puzzling Under Pressure

Ms. Starlet Baker

Description:

How do you maintain composure, problem-solve, and communicate effectively with others when the pressure is on? In a hands-on exploration of quick thinking and teamwork, students will face mind-bending puzzles, problem-solving games, bomb-defusing challenges, and an interactive escape room experience. As a class, we will analyze our strengths and weaknesses, determine efficient practices, and track our progress over the course. Students will also practice applying their ability to think on their feet in real-life scenarios like mock job interviews. Get ready to unravel mysteries, crack codes, and collaborate effectively to conquer each new challenge.

Length:

- This course will run on half-days, totaling 21 hours.

Travel:

- There will be one field trip day to One Way Out Escape Rooms.

Fees:

- There is a \$27 fee for this course.

Pre-requisites/Restrictions

- The student limit for this course is 14 students.

Content Outline:

- Ground Zero – We will begin by tackling an escape room box to gauge our starting skill level and identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth. Discussion of the value of problem-solving under pressure.
- Teamwork Dynamics – We will explore a variety of teamwork challenges and cooperative games that test our ability to work in cohesive units.
- Efficiency – We will enter the bomb-defusing challenge, optimizing our time management by testing different task distribution strategies and communication tactics.
- Outside the Box – We will face a variety of challenges focused on testing our ability to adapt and think outside the normal bounds to solve complex problems.
- Welcome to the Real World – We will study strategies from *Thinking on Your Feet: Tools to Communicate Clearly and Convincingly* by Dr. Marlene Caroselli, discovering



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Geography of Tea: *Camellia sinensis* across the globe

Mrs. Lauren Helm

Description:

The leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* plant are brewed daily in every inhabited continent, some varieties as common as water and some valued more per pound than the most precious elements on earth. Tea defines cultures and remains an integral expression of hospitality across the world. For 3,000 years, tea (*Camellia sinensis*) was confined to East Asia, and with each century, tea became more and more rooted into their daily cultures and rituals. It remained there until the first tea leaves were brought to Europe in the 17th century. The growing appetite for tea in the West had global effects, beginning with the Opium Wars, leading to plant smuggling, formation of the East India Company and birth of a global economy, and even a protest that launched the American Revolution.

Given its indelible mark on human history, we will explore the teas that define our world both through sensory experiences and cultural practices. We will learn about the geographical features and historical background that influenced the spread of tea through these diverse regions. Non-*camellia sinensis* teas like rooibos and yerba mate are included by virtue of their similar usage in the southern hemisphere. Each day we will examine loose-leaf teas to understand their preparation and production. We will learn to properly steep the leaves, add additional ingredients like spices and herbs, and sample foods that often accompany the beverage. Together we will gain understanding and appreciation for the power these small leaves have exerted over civilizations past and present.

Length:

- This course will run on half-days, totaling 21 hours.

Travel:

- None.

Fees:

- There is a \$25 fee for this course.

Pre-requisites/Restrictions

- Maximum of 18 students in this course.



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SCHOOLS

SCHOOL OF RHETORIC

J-TERM

Hooked on Crochet

Mrs. Amy McCarty

Description:

For hundreds of years, people made their own clothes and household items, but the industrial revolution led to machines taking over the bulk of manufacturing. Although machines can spin yarn and create crocheted items much faster than people we still continue to create by hand. In this introductory course, students will learn to use a drop spindle to make their own yarn and the basics of crochet to make their own hats, granny squares, and stuffed animals. Join us as we follow in the footsteps of millions of fiber artists who keep spinning and crocheting alive, using simple techniques to dream up ideas and make our own yarn art that is both useful and rewarding.

Length:

- This course will run on half-days, totaling 21 hours.

Travel:

- None

Fees:

- There is a fee of \$20 associated with this course.

Pre-requisites/Restrictions

- None

Content Outline:

- Introduction to the Drop Spindle
 - Create a simple drop spindle
 - Create unique yarns using our spindles
- Introduction to Crochet
 - Basic Stitches: chain stitch, single crochet, slip stitch
 - Pattern symbols for these stitches
 - Making a square-shaped project: washcloth, coaster, potholder
- Crocheting a circle
 - New stitch: double crochet
 - Project: Granny Square, flower
- New stitches: increase/decrease
- Stuffed animals
 - Chicken



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SCHOOLS

SCHOOL OF RHETORIC

J-TERM

Give My Regards To Broadway

Mrs. Gail Mitchell

Description:

Why are Broadway musicals so popular? How do they both reflect and influence American culture? This course will study the rise and development of Broadway musicals, discussing the elements of musical theater (plot, characters, songs, and dances) and examining the Broadway style as it was created and has changed over time. We will accomplish this by watching videos of several Broadway classics, analyzing and critiquing each show, building an understanding of the Broadway musical style and the factors that keep Americans flocking to New York and the “Great White Way.”

Length:

- This course will run on half-days, totaling 21 hours.

Travel:

- None.

Fees:

- None.

Pre-requisites/Restrictions

- Maximum of 18 students in this course.

Content Outline:

- We first look at the history of musicals with a focus on the early days of Broadway.
 - What and where is Broadway?
 - 19th-century musical influences on Broadway shows
- We will watch and critique four Broadway shows, as listed below, that represent the best musicals of their period, looking at plot, character development, and themes, and how song and dance contribute to these.
- We will then compare the shows, considering the changes in Broadway styles over time as well as what elements are consistent.
 - Early Broadway (1900-1943): *42nd Street*
 - Classic Broadway (1943-1965): *Oklahoma!*
 - Broadway and Changing Themes: *West Side Story*
 - Broadway and Changing Styles: *Phantom of the Opera*



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SCHOOL OF RHETORIC
J-TERM

The Supreme Court in Session

Dr. Erin Uminn

Description:

Marbury v Madison. Dred Scott. Plessy v Ferguson. Brown v Board of Education. Roe v Wade. The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS), the third branch of government established in the Constitution, occupies an enormous space both in the history of our country and in the popular imagination. This course will explore the history of the court, and its development as a force in American governance and culture. With an emphasis on *actually reading* famous decisions, we will dig into history surrounding these cases and how later courts interacted with previous decisions. We will also consider the lives and careers of two trail blazing members of the court in more recent times – Justice Ginsberg and Justice Thomas.

Length:

- This course will run on half-days, totaling 21 hours.

Travel:

- None.

Fees:

- None.

Pre-requisites/Restrictions

- None.

Content Outline:

- We start with a review of the Constitution and the branches of our government.
- We will discuss the early history of the court as it slowly developed.
- Cases:
 - Marbury v Madison (1803) which establishes the very concept of judicial review – that SCOTUS could declare a law ‘unconstitutional’.
 - McCulloch v Maryland (1819) which confirmed the federal government’s implied powers and supremacy over states.
 - Dred Scott v Sandford (1857) in which SCOTUS declared that African Americans were “not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word *citizens* in the Constitution.”
 - We will read Abraham Lincoln’s speech reflecting on this decision.



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