

Hello everyone,

I hope you're having a relaxing summer. This email is to both welcome you to Omnibus VI and give you information that will help you make plans to be ready for school in mid September.

Below you'll find:

- 1) the course syllabus
- 2) the list of books we'll be using
- 3) the summer reading & writing assignment (with rubric)
- 4) general information & instructions for supplies and assignments
- 5) "Madman, Architect, Carpenter, Judge" essay about essays

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin and the other books we'll be using for the school year have already been ordered. For logistical considerations, we will wait until they all arrive to alert everyone to the pickup arrangements.

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin is relatively short and so the reading portion of the summer assignment is not time-consuming. The essay will be the more time-intensive portion.

Ideally, students should begin reading in August as we want the novel to be fresh in their memories for discussion on the first day of school.

Parents and students, please read through the 5 sections below carefully as they will provide essential information for the summer and for the school year.

Thank you in advance for your help — I look forward to working with your student in the coming year. In the meantime, have a wonderful summer!

Cindy Leahy

Section 1

OMNIBUS VI: MODERN 2021-22 SYLLABUS

"The tradition of the West is embodied in the Great Conversation that began in the dawn of history and that continues to the present day. Whatever the merits of other civilizations in other respects, no civilization is like that of the West in this respect. No other civilization can claim that its defining characteristic is a dialogue of this sort. No dialogue in any other civilization can compare with that of the West in the number of great works of the mind that have contributed to this dialogue."

- Robert M. Hutchins

Course Description:

This Omnibus is the last in a six year series addressing the literature, history and culture of major Western civilizations in chronological order in two three year cycles. The course format will be a Paideia discussion (used in the Great Books program), which is based on close reading of literature and historical accounts.

Summer Reading: Benjamin Franklin *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*

Unit One *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*: a classical education, the founding fathers and the American Revolution

September 16 — *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* -- “the first American”; businessman, inventor, diplomat and statesman; the individual -- private, public and theoretical

Unit Two Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*: courtly love, the romantic ideal and social satire

September 23 *Don Quixote* (Introduction - Part I chapter XVI)

September 30 *Don Quixote* -- (Part I chapter XVII - Part II chapter V)

October 7 *Don Quixote* (Part II chapter VI - end)

October 14 — Cultural enrichment — no class

Unit Three Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Faust: a moral comedy*

October 21 — (*Part I - Walpurgis Night*) ennui, arrogance and the Faustian bargain

October 28 — *Faust* -- (*Part I Walpurgis Night Dream - Part II Classical Walpurgis Night*) classical allusions, further ambitions and failures

November 4 — *Faust* -- (Part II Act III - end) shades of Euripides, the tragedy becomes comic Roman culture

Writing Assignment: a narrative on a moral theme

Unit Four **British Poetry: Gerard Manley Hopkins**, poet and priest

November 11 Gerard Manley Hopkins -- “The Child is Father to the Man”, “Pied Beauty”, “God’s Grandeur”, “Spring and Fall: to a Young Child”, “Repeat That, Repeat”

Unit Five Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*: the novel of ideas, a murder mystery

November 18 — *Brothers Karamazov* -- Book I - III, chapter 5

November 25 — Thanksgiving

December 2 — *Brothers Karamazov* -- Book III, Chapter 6 - Book V, Chapter 4

December 9 — *Brothers Karamazov* -- Book V, Chapter 5 - Book VII

Christmas break

January 6 — *Brothers Karamazov* -- Book VIII - IX

January 13 Cultural enrichment — no class

January 20 — *Brothers Karamazov* -- Book X - XI, Chapter 7

January 27 — *Brothers Karamazov* --Book XI, Chapter 8 - Book XII, Chapter 10

February 3 — *Brothers Karamazov* -- Book XII 11 - end

Writing Assignment: a thesis on a theme from Dostoevsky

February 10 — Cultural enrichment — no class

Unit Six British Poetry Pt. II: W.B. Yeats, the poet of the “deep heart’s core”

February 17 W.B. Yeats “Sailing to Byzantium”, “Adam’s Curse”, “The Lake Isle of Innisfree”, “When You Are Old”, “The Heart of the Woman”

Unit Seven Culture Clashes in Two Genres

February 24 The Novella: *Daisy Miller* - (beginning to end)

March 3 — The Essay: **Henry David Thoreau** “Civil Disobedience”

March 10 — Cultural enrichment — no class

Unit Eight The Short Story: “to see a world in a grain of sand”

March 17 — Washington Irving “Rip Van Winkle”; Herman Melville “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids”

March 24 — O. Henry “The Ransom of Red Chief”; Flannery O’Connor “A Late Encounter with the Enemy”

April 7 — James Thurber “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”; Eudora Welty “Where is the Voice Coming From?”

April 14 — Easter break

April 21 Willa Cather “Night at Greenway Court”; Ernest Hemingway “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place”

Unit Nine F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*: autobiographical novel of the Jazz Age

April 28 — *The Great Gatsby* -- Chapters 1-4

May 5 — *The Great Gatsby* -- Chapters 5 - end

May 12 — Cultural enrichment — no class

Writing Assignment: an autobiographical narrative in the style of one of the authors from units eight or nine

Unit Ten Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town*: the simple beauty of Life

May 19 — *Our Town* -- Acts 1- IV

May 26 — performances from *Our Town*

Section 2

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin by Benjamin Franklin

Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

Faust: A Tragedy by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Daisy Miller by Henry James

Three Plays: Our Town, The Skin of Our Teeth, and The Matchmaker by Thornton Wilder

The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoevsky

The Oxford Book of American Short Stories ed. Joyce Carol Oates *Section 3*

These have all been ordered for you and Mrs. Lung has them sorted, bagged; she will bring them for pick up at the Back to School meetings.

Monday, August 2nd starting at 6:30 p.m.

or

Thursday, August 26th, starting at 9:00 a.m.

Section 3

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT

In Part One of the Autobiography, Franklin offers the story of his own life, beginning with his family genealogy, describing his childhood as the youngest son of a harsh father, and discussing at length his youthful rebellion against both personal and social patriarchy.

Intended as an inspiration to young Americans and written in 1784 and 1788 at the request of several admirers, Parts Two and Three continue Franklin's account of his life but focus more on the public and theoretical man as opposed to the private individual.

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin achieves its goal of providing a model for successive generations, due in great part to the author's careful construction of his own persona as the representative American.

DIRECTIONS --

Benjamin Franklin, one of the preeminent figures of the American Revolution, is often referred to as “the first American”. Using material from throughout his autobiography, write a 900 - 1000 word essay showing the many ways this moniker might be appropriate. Remember: this is a high honor to be called the premier American — you have a tall order to convince the reader that anyone is truly worthy of such a label. Be persuasive with substantive details and logical justifications!

Be certain to use proper essay form and content. Attach a copy of this rubric stapled to your essay:

- 1) funnel structure _____
- 2) a clear thesis statement _____
- 3) body paragraphs that support and develop the thesis _____
- 4) a topic sentence for each body paragraph _____
- 5) at least 3 short excerpts from the text for each body paragraph _____
- 6) a satisfying conclusion _____
- 7) Please submit in typewritten form. Remember that your essay will be infinitely stronger if you spend the proper time gathering material and playing with the ideas (the "madman")

phase) before you plan ("architect" phase) draft ("carpenter" phase) and, finally, evaluate ("judge" phase) your writing.

Any questions? Just ask (the earlier the better -- I'll likely be out of town and not have access to email from the end of August to the first day of school).

Please note that this assignment is due the first day of class.

Section 4

SUPPLIES TO BRING TO CLASS EVERY WEEK

- 1) 3 ring binder with standard looseleaf notebook paper for taking notes. I recommend pens for note taking.
- 2) Dividers for keeping the notebook organized. I suggest making labels that correspond with the units on the syllabus.
- 3) the text we're reading from

INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSIGNMENTS

Please only use looseleaf paper and ink OR typewritten format for assignments. The frayed edged of spiral bound notebooks make a mess, both at school and at home and so should be avoided. Pencil smears and is very difficult for my eyes to read. For that reason, please all handwritten papers must be in ink.

Homework will vary slightly in length from week to week. Pacing is typically adjusting to allow more time at the beginning of an author's work so that students can adjust to the author's style.

Typical time for completion of weekly reading /research assignments is between two hours and three hours per week. The purpose of the questions is to have material that's easily accessible for class discussions. For that reason, I always ask that students have the following for each question.

- 1) at least 3 potential answers (depending on the question, there may be more) succinctly stated. These answers must be descriptive to be useful, but do not need to be stated in complete sentences.
- 2) for EACH potential answer, there MUST be a text reference, i.e., a page number or line number for ready access
- 3) for each reference, highlight or otherwise mark in the text, again, for easy reference

Following these instructions will greatly facilitate meaningful class discussions, as well as provide valuable material for essay assignments.

Major writing assignments are given well in advance so that students have the flexibility to plan and to gather material for the assignment. Please make every effort to support your child in developing good writing habits by having him start early. Papers begun late are rarely well done — and it's not the habit you want your child to develop for college!

Instructions for assignments are written so that they can be carefully fulfilled. Please help your child establish the habit of making sure all tasks are completed. It's a wonderful -- and essential -- student skill to develop! It should be noted that papers that fail to follow directions or have tasks yet to be fulfilled will be returned without grading.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

Section 5

Madman, Architect, Carpenter, and Judge: Roles and the Writing Process (from an essay by Betty S. Flowers)

What's the hardest part of writing? What happens when you get stuck is that two competing energies are locked horn to horn, pushing against each other. One is the energy of what I'll call your 'madman.' He is full of ideas, writes crazily and perhaps rather sloppily, gets carried away by enthusiasm or anger, and if really let loose, could turn out ten pages an hour.

The second is a kind of critical energy-what I'll call the 'judge.' He's been educated and knows a sentence fragment when he sees one. He peers over your shoulder and says, 'That's trash!' with such authority that the madman loses his crazy confidence and shrivels up. You know the judge is right-after all, he speaks with the voice of your most imperious English teacher. But for all his sharpness of eye, he can't create anything.

So when you're stuck, often it's when your madman starts to write, but your judge pounces on him.

Of course this is to over-dramatize the writing process-but not entirely. Writing is so complex, involves so many skills of heart, mind and eye, that sitting down to a fresh sheet of paper can sometime seem like 'the hardest work among those not impossible,' as Yeats put it. Whatever joy there is in the writing process can come only when the energies are flowing freely- when you're not stuck.

The trick to not getting stuck involves separating the energies. If you let the judge with his intimidating carping come too close to the madman and his playful, creative energies, the ideas which form the basis for your writing will never have a chance to surface. But you can't simply throw out the judge. The subjective personal outpourings of your madman must be balanced by the objective, impersonal vision of the educated critic within you. Writing is not just self-expression; it is communication as well.

Start by promising your judge that you'll get around to asking his opinion, but not now. And then let the madman energy flow. Find what interests you in the topic, the question or emotion that it raises in you, and respond as you might to a friend-or an enemy. Talk on paper, page after page, and don't stop to judge or correct sentences. Then, after a set amount of time, perhaps, stop and gather the paper up and wait a day.

The next morning, ask your 'architect' to enter. She will read the wild scribblings saved from the night before and pick out maybe a tenth of

the jottings as relevant or interesting. (You can see immediately that the architect is not sentimental about what the madman wrote; she is not going to save every crumb for posterity.) Her job is simply to select large chunks of material and to arrange them in a pattern that might form an argument. The thinking here is large, organizational, paragraph level thinking-the architect doesn't worry about sentence structure.

The sentence structure is left for the 'carpenter' who enters after the essay has been hewn into large chunks of related ideas. The carpenter nails these ideas together in a logical sequence, making sure each sentence is clearly written, contributes to the argument of the paragraph, and

leads logically and gracefully to the next sentence. When the carpenter finishes, the essay should be smooth and watertight.

And then the judge comes around to inspect. Punctuation, spelling, grammar, tone—all the details which result in a polished essay become important only in this last stage. These details are not the concern of the madman who's come up with them, or the architect who's organized them, or the carpenter who's nailed the ideas together, sentence by sentence. Save details for the judge.