

## OMNIBUS SYLLABI FOR LEVELS I -VI

"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 Descriptions:

Omnibus is 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.

**Writing assignments for Omnibus courses in general:** Each year there will be four major writing assignments, two that are more expressive/creative/imitative in nature, such as imitations of style, parodies, speeches in character, encomia, invectives, etc.) and two that are analytical essays (analysis of themes, conflicts, characters, symbolism, etc.). These essays are always preceded by directed class discussion as well as extensive instruction in essay writing.

**Omnibus I: Ancient Cultures** (2022 - 2023, 2025 - 2026) Required summer reading: George Orwell's *Animal Farm* Unit I: George Orwell's *Animal Farm* the power of language & introduction to the Paideia discussion method Unit II: Homer's *Iliad & Odyssey* the oral tradition, story structure, heroic themes Unit III: Herodotus & Thucydides (selected readings) transition to the written tradition, the beginnings of the study of history Unit IV: Plutarch, Livy & Suetonius (selected readings) moral biographies, comparisons, studies of character Unit V: Vergil's *Aeneid* creating a composite history; the written epic, the secondary epic

**Omnibus II : Medieval and Renaissance** (2023 - 2024, 2026 - 2027) Required summer reading: *Famous Men of the Middle Ages*. I: Introduction to the Paideia method, Medieval drama *Everyman* a medieval morality play Unit II: *Bulfinch's Age of Charlemagne* the *Song of Roland* introduction to the Middle Ages: the rise of education, culture Unit III: *Beowulf* Anglo-Saxon England, Old English, the heroic epic continued, the Dark Ages transition from pagan to Christian culture Unit IV: *Bulfinch's Age of Chivalry*, (the Arthurian Legends ) the heroic quest, the Crusades, Saxon England continued, Norman England, Unit V: Dante's *Divine Comedy* feudal Italy, the beginnings of the Renaissance, classical allusions, courtly love continued Unit VI: Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (selected readings) the triumph of Middle English , the tumultuous 14th century, William Caxton and the printing press in England, the pilgrimage, the romance, classical allusions, Medieval drama Unit VII: Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* early Modern English, blank verse, iambic pentameter, rhymed couplets, Elizabethan drama

**Omnibus III: Modern** (2024- 2025, 2027-2028) Required summer reading: Ray Bradbury 's *Fahrenheit 451* Unit I: Introduction to Paideia, modern literature, Unit II: the sonnet/ Milton & the Enlightenment; John Milton's *Paradise Lost* British satire Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" Unit III: Parody, the Enlightenment, *Gulliver's Travels* by Unit IV: Introduction to American literature; the Industrial Age/ poetic scansion Emily Dickinson ; Walt Whitman selected poems Unit V: The French Revolution; the novel as a form of literature, techniques of characterization; ironic tone Charles Dickens' *Tale of Two*

*Cities* Unit VI: the American novel, American dialect, humor Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*; Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

**Omnibus IV: Ancient Drama and History** (2022 - 2023, 2025 - 2026) Required summer reading: Herodotus' *Histories* Unit I: Introduction to Paideia, Ancient literature the foundations: epic, historical narrative *Gilgamesh* Unit II: the development of Greek drama; Aristotle's definition of tragedy; the structure of a tragedy, the festivals; the trilogy as a form, satyr plays, the use of comic relief Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (*Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, *Eumenides*) Unit III : explorations of the themes of fate, justice and enmity Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and *The Persians* Unit IV: Greek & Roman History scientific versus literary history Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* Unit V: Later Greek Tragedians: new stagings, additional actors, new perspectives and tones, the isolated Sophoclean hero and the limits of free will Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone* duty and the individual versus the state Euripides' *Medea*, the irrational Unit VI: Philosophy and Moral Biography moral and political philosophy as bases for society, Plutarch's Lives: Greek leaders and their Roman comparisons Unit VII: the role of comedy in Greek festivals, old comedy, new comedy Aristophanes' *Knights* political satire and human nature Plautus' *The Braggart Soldier* the structure of Roman comedy, stage design, stock characters, Roman satire

**Omnibus V: Medieval and Renaissance** (2023 - 2024, 2026 - 2027) Required summer reading: Irving Stone's *The Agony and the Ecstasy* Unit I: Petrarch's sonnets, the Italian Quattrocento & the Renaissance, courtly love and the Italian sonnet, writing an Italian sonnet Unit II: Middle English Arthurian legend in alliterative verse *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Unit III: the political romance Thomas More's *Utopia* Unit IV: the political treatise; power and the character of government Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* Unit V: the tragic romance and the heroic quest Sir Thomas Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur* Unit VI: an allegorical epic of Elizabethan England Sir Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* Unit VII: moral drama about the soul's yearning for the infinite, transition from medieval to Renaissance England, "The Courtier" a new estate for society, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* Unit VIII: the Elizabethan sonnet, practice in scansion, analysis and interpretation of poetry, Spenserian & Shakespearean Sonnets Unit IX: Shakespearean drama: *Richard III* historical drama, *Macbeth* the nature of ambition, *The Merchant of Venice* a comedy of morals

**Omnibus VI: Modern** (2024- 2025, 2027-2028) Required summer reading: *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* Unit I: a classical education, the founding fathers and the American Revolution "the first American" inventor, diplomat and statesman; the individual private, public and theoretical Unit II: courtly love, the romantic ideal, social satire and the modern novel Cervantes' *Don Quixote* Unit III: a moral comedy Goethe's *Faust* the Faustian bargain, Neoclassicism, romanticism Unit IV: Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* the novel of ideas Unit V: British poetry: Gerard Manley Hopkins precursor to modern poetry, God in nature, consonant chiming, sprung rhythms, W.B. Yeats, the poet of the "deep heart's core" Unit VI: the novella: Henry James' *Daisy Miller* cultural tensions Unit VII: the essay Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" Unit VIII: the short story "to see a world in a grain of sand" Washington Irving "Rip Van Winkle", Flannery O'Connor "A Late Encounter with the Enemy" O. Henry "The Ransom of Red Chief", Willa Cather "Night at Greenway Court", Ernest Hemingway "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place", James Thurber "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty", Eudora Welty "Where is the Voice Coming From?" Unit IX: autobiographical novel of America's Jazz Age F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* Unit X: Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* the simple beauty of Life