



# THE OXBOW SCHOOL

*A Semester of Art & Academics*



THE OXBOW SCHOOL CURRICULUM PACKET  
2019/2020

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# **Program Description**

**Founders:** Ann Hatch and Robert and Margrit Mondavi

## **Overview**

The Oxbow School is a one-semester art and academically focused boarding program for high school juniors, seniors and gap-year students in beautiful Napa, CA. At Oxbow students are immersed in an environment of critical thinking and creative problem solving that prepares them for life after high school. Students come from all over the country and internationally to learn from our distinguished faculty and world-renowned visiting artists.

The Oxbow School is a private, independent, and non-profit organization. Oxbow welcomes approximately 45 students each semester; and also offers an engaging and inspiring summer program for students aged fourteen to sixteen. Students often earn distinguished art and writing awards after attending Oxbow and go on to some of the most competitive colleges and universities.

The Oxbow curriculum is designed to fulfill the requirements of the nation's best public and private high schools and is as much about academics as it is about art making. All of the courses at Oxbow are accredited, honors level, and designed to prepare students for the college experience.

As the nation's only art-focused semester boarding school for high school students, Oxbow represents a unique educational model. It started with a belief in the impact that contact with artists could have on young minds, whether or not they became artists. We set out to create a stimulating environment—community, curriculum, and facilities—on a beautiful site that is conducive to fostering student growth. We believe that putting students, artists, and teachers together in a coherent interdisciplinary context fuses the life of the mind with the skills of the hand, instilling the practice of life-long learning that cultivates empowered and productive lives.

## **Subjects Offered**

Students who attend Oxbow will receive 2 semester credits in Studio Art and 1 semester credit each in English, US History, Environmental Science, Math and Physical Education. Additional math courses and language tutoring are offered, but not required. Students will engage in writing and research in each of our core courses and will have an opportunity to do an in-depth final research, writing, and art project of their design.

## **Accreditation**

The Oxbow School is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and AdvancED. AdvancED accreditation divisions include the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), and the Southern Association of College and Schools Counsel on Accreditation and Improvement (SACS CASI).

## **Financial Aid/ Scholarships**

Oxbow is proud to offer a wide range of financial assistance to families of all income levels. Both need-based aid and merit-based scholarships are available. Those students interested in being considered for our full and close to full need-based scholarships should complete their applications by our February 15<sup>th</sup> Priority Date.

## **Student Life**

All students live in the dormitory suites during their Oxbow experience. Each dormitory suite includes three shared bedrooms, a common area, two bathrooms, mini refrigerator, and a washer/dryer combination.

The Oxbow School is committed to offering a healthy and active experience to all students. Oxbow Students enjoy all of their meals on campus. Our dining hall endeavors to serve local, seasonal, and sustainable foods. In addition to complete meals, the Oxbow school also offers a variety of snacks for students to enjoy between meals. Regular health and wellness offerings may include biking, hiking, kayaking, yoga, gardening, rock-climbing, and miscellaneous activities.

Our residential life team works with students to plan social activities throughout the semester. Activities offered at Oxbow can include farm apprenticeships, current events discussions, student blogging, pet shelter volunteering, and on campus events such as pizza parties, movie nights, and costume contests. In addition, field trips to museums, studios, and galleries are an integral part of the Oxbow experience. The Oxbow School also offers opportunities for students to participate in outdoor adventures and backpacking expeditions.

## **Community Service/Volunteer Hours**

There are select opportunities for students in need of Community Service Hours such as co-curricular shelter dog walking, an annual After School Art Program for local middle schoolers during the Spring Semester, and occasionally extracurricular Oxbow farm/garden work. Students will need to arrange with the faculty point person and facilitate communication between them and their sending school coordinator to sign off on hours.





## **Oxbow Academic Overview**

At Oxbow, we are fully committed to working with students' home schools to best support their time with us, and facilitate their transition home. The first step is for families to meet with their home school to go over this Curriculum Packet. The Admissions Director and Academic Dean are available to answer questions and provide additional information as needed.

Students come to Oxbow from many different school systems and districts, and sending school diploma requirements vary, school-to-school. We urge students to begin the conversation with their sending school early in the application process, so that any credit issues can be resolved before the student arrives on-campus. Many of the best public and private high schools send their students to Oxbow and support our curriculum; a list of our sending schools can be found on page 16 of this document, and on our website.

Some students have found that online courses can be a way to earn credit for coursework not offered at Oxbow. Please talk to your school about online coursework to ensure that you will receive credit before you arrive at Oxbow.

### **Tutorials**

Language tutoring in French, Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese are available for those students who require it for an additional fee. This fee is waived for students from our Member Schools. The purpose of language tutoring is to keep students engaged in their conversational abilities. They will meet with a tutor weekly, individually or in small groups.

\* Other languages: Students have received tutoring in other languages but support is dependent upon our ability to find a good tutor in the Napa area. Instruction in other languages is not guaranteed and must be arranged in advance. Online courses are also an option.

### **Other Tutoring**

Students requesting a tutor for coursework outside of the core curriculum at Oxbow may work with the Academic Dean to make arrangements, but families will be responsible for payments for private tutorials. For example, some families have requested extra support for standardized test preparation. There are many models to choose from—practice exams at a testing center in Napa, scheduled preparatory classes, or 1:1 tutoring on the Oxbow campus.

### **Advanced Placement**

Because integration between disciplines is central to academic studies at Oxbow, we do not offer content-specific Advanced Placement classes. However, in addition to immersing themselves in the core curriculum at Oxbow, we have several students each semester who choose to continue with their AP studies by following along with sending school curriculum/syllabi or taking an online course supported by our faculty. The ability to manage such a workload is very demanding; therefore, it is recommended that students limit their independent studies in AP to a maximum of two classes. (Students who take Math, English Language and Composition, English Literature and Composition,

U.S. History, and Environmental Science fare very well on the exams each spring.)

The Oxbow Humanities faculty may be available to offer intermittent support during the semester on a case-by-case basis. Students are encouraged to be self-directed in managing their AP workload on their own time. Oxbow alumni who took on the additional work enthusiastically say it was worth it to attend Oxbow.

Oxbow will assist students in registering for AP tests in the Spring at Napa High School.

## Testing

Students can take the PSATs, SATs, ACTs, and some AP tests at testing sites in Napa. Students planning to take the SATs or ACTs must register for those tests online (as they would otherwise). When registering for these tests, please sign up at Napa High School (for the SAT) or Vintage High School (for the ACT) as the preferred testing site. If students qualify for additional time, it is essential that parents request this through the testing organization well ahead of the test date.

## UC a-g

For in-state students, The University of California system requires that coursework completed during high school be recognized as "UC a-g approved." This approval is open solely to **4-year, diploma granting high schools**; as a semester school, Oxbow is exempt from this process. Therefore, students who attend schools in California are urged to get approval for Oxbow coursework through their appropriate administrator (Principal or Head of School). Here is the language taken directly from the UC website:

"Can students use courses taken away from their home high schools to meet the 'a-g' requirement?"

Approved "a-g" coursework taken at other California high schools accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC); high school courses completed at any U.S. regionally accredited high school or an international secondary school approved by the Ministry of Education in the country, may be used to satisfy the UC admission requirements. The principal of the student's home high school must certify that the course is comparable to other college-preparatory courses offered at the high school. UC expects that such certification follows a careful review of the curriculum and/or testing of ability level by the principal, department chair, district curriculum director or other qualified school or district personnel. The principal designates his or her certification by granting permission for the course to be listed on the student's transcript, along with credits granted and grades earned."

Students can also meet UC admissions' requirements in other ways. For example, a score of 680 or higher on the SAT meets the entry-level writing requirement.

Please note that California is the only state with "a-g" requirements. If out-of-state students are interested in applying to a UC school, they are not impacted. Many Oxbow alumni have gone on to attend UC schools and have credited their time at Oxbow for strengthening their applications. Please refer directly to the UC website.

## Oxbow Course Chart

The following chart illustrates credits offered at The Oxbow School, and outlines the requirements our courses most often fulfill. What credits are accepted varies from school to school and is up to the discretion of the sending school.

# THE OXBOW SCHOOL

## REQUIRED COURSES

Course Title	Credits	May Fulfill
Honors Studio Art	2	Painting, Sculpture, New Media, Printmaking
Honors English	1	American Literature, Advanced Composition, Language Arts
Honors Environmental Science	1	Food Systems, Regenerative Agriculture, Agro-Ecology, Ecology
Honors US History	1	Civics, Government, Economics, Philosophy
Physical Education	1	Physical Education
Independent Research in Mathematics	1	Advanced Algebra II, Pre-Calculus, Pre-Calculus/Trigonometry

## ELECTIVE OPTIONS (NOT REQUIRED)

Course Title	Credits
Language Tutoring in: Spanish, French, Japanese, or Chinese	1
Calculus, AP Calculus, Trigonometry, Geometry	1

\*Additional requests may be accommodated on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the Admissions Office at [admissions@oxbowschool.org](mailto:admissions@oxbowschool.org) with specific questions.

# HONORS ENGLISH

"There's no greater agony than bearing an untold story within you."  
—Maya Angelou

"What is the Self?" "How do I live?" "What is my story?" This literary seminar examines the role of storytelling as it relates to the human condition, the natural world, and portraits of the individual self. The course begins with an in-depth study of a pivotal chapter in American literary history, the Transcendental movement of the mid-1800s. Henry David Thoreau's seminal text, *Walden*, acts as a platform to pose timeless questions. Students identify major themes within *Walden*, focusing on the call to cultivate a uniquely "American" identity. Students analyze the subsequent impact that Thoreau and his contemporaries had on generations of modern writers. This inquiry inspires students to nurture their own voice in writing, whereby they have many opportunities to build an expansive portfolio and experiment with the written word. At the end of this journey, students have a better sense of how to synthesize and apply their unique voice to their overall studies.

The core skills set covers: active reading, literary analysis, writing (journaling, creative nonfiction, investigative journalism), peer collaboration and critique, and public performance.



# HONORS ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

*“Ask the questions that have no answers. Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias. Say that your main crop is the forest that you did not plant, that you will not harvest. Say that the leaves are harvested when they have rotted into the mold. Call that profit. Prophesy such returns.” —Wendell Berry*

What are the mineral and chemical foundations of modern human civilization? How are externalized “costs” measured? How do my actions affect the natural world? In the experiential Environmental Science class at Oxbow, students explore their relationship to the natural world through a variety of scientific lenses—ecology, sustainable agronomy, and scientific inquiry. Students have the opportunity to actively observe their position in the natural environment of Napa Valley. Through their study of interconnected food systems, they examine the definition of sustainability and its three pillars—ecological soundness, economic viability, and social justice. Starting from the dirt under their feet and moving up to the food on their own plates, students locate themselves globally; they leave the program with a greater understanding of how to contextualize their daily choices and how those choices impact the rest of the planet.

The core skill set covers: scientific inquiry, technical writing, systems thinking, social activism, and understanding ecological interdependence.





# HONORS US HISTORY

"We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The United States History course at Oxbow combines key ideas related to history, economics, government, and philosophy to provide a multi-faceted understanding of the evolution of American society. The objective of this course is to provide opportunities for students to develop their own philosophic lens and refine the moral compass through which they examine history. Students begin the course with a discussion of the development of Transcendentalism as it exists in the context of the Enlightenment, Industrialization, and Romantic eras. Students then apply their newly constructed knowledge to discuss issues related to democracy. Students focus on how the economic and cultural underpinnings of society create conditions for new ideas and political organization to emerge. Students leave the course with a clear understanding that they have a powerful role to play in the unfurling of history; that civic awareness and engagement are fundamental to the tenets of democracy.

The core skill set covers: deep philosophic inquiry, document-based research, Socratic dialogue, public speaking, analytic and persuasive writing.





# MATH

*“If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”  
—Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

Each semester, we welcome students from different math backgrounds and ability levels. In order to best accommodate all of the students needs we gather as much information from students and schools as possible about their home school math courses. We then use a combination of online math courses, class time, study halls, Math Meals and when necessary, tutors to support students in whichever level of math they are taking. Students are supported and evaluated by Math faculty or a tutor depending on which course they need. Students who do not need any math while at Oxbow will have an opportunity to propose a creative independent study project that relates to mathematics.

Students indicate to us which math credit they will need while at Oxbow after being accepted on their Course Selection Sheets. You can find a list of the most common math selections on The Oxbow Course Chart on page 7. Students will supplement our standard curriculum—which can be found below—with topics and materials from sending schools. Each student’s first assignment is to upload their sending school curriculum.

Topics covered at Oxbow:

- Creating a personal definition of what math is
- Functions (definition, functional and non-functional relations, continuous vs. types of discontinuity, increasing/decreasing/ constant)
- Inverse Functions (definition, 1:1 vs. restricted domain inverses, inverses of linear, quadratic, exponential, and basic trig functions)
- Lines (slope intercept form, finding the equation of a tangent line, line of best fit, finding the inverse, Speed, Arithmetic Sequences)
- Exponents and Logs
- Polynomials, Rational Functions, and Limits (Quadratics, Hyperbolas, Asymptotes, Polynomials and Rational Functions Limits and Infinity)
- Basic Sampling Statistics and Curve Fitting to Data
- The Pythagorean Theorem, the Distance Formula, the Cartesian Circle
- Right Triangle Trig, the Unit Circle, the Polar Form
- Trig Waves and Physical Applications

## HONORS STUDIO ART

"The process is what matters to me-- making the work, how one work leads to another, and how showing the work and having people look at it and talk about it feels."  
—Jessica Stockholder

Oxbow's interdisciplinary Honors Studio Art course guides students through a series of carefully conceived assignments that build skills and provide instruction in painting, printmaking, sculpture, photography, and new media. Over the course of the semester students develop their individual voice and acquire a working knowledge of issues in contemporary art. Students learn to understand their creative process and expand their aesthetic thinking while growing within a community of artists. Oxbow students vary widely in their interests and experience and no previous studio art experience is required.

During the first month of the program, theme-based projects are designed and sequenced for students to experiment with new mediums, gain new skills, and develop the confidence to translate their visions and experiences into a range of media. Students have access to the Oxbow studios and supplies throughout the day and until 10:00pm each night.

Visiting Artist lectures inspire students and Artist Residencies engage students in individual and collaborative work. Visits to artist's studios, museums, galleries, and Art History lectures enrich the curriculum. Two major research-based projects allow students to design creative projects of their own choosing with the potential to work in depth within a single medium or to integrate diverse media and strategies. Students are encouraged to work in a variety of media and often choose to explore fashion, video, photography, illustration, painting, drawing, design, animation, performance art, architecture, sculpture, printmaking, experimental media, and more.

Students leave Oxbow with an impressive portfolio of artwork, an artist statement, and experience talking and writing about their work and the work of others. They also gain an understanding of how their artwork relates to academic studies. Countless Oxbow Alumni have credited their time at Oxbow for helping them earn admission and scholarships to top colleges and universities.

## FINAL PROJECT

At the conclusion of the Oxbow program, students have the unique opportunity to become an expert on a topic of their own choosing. The Final Project is a chance to focus on a subject in great depth with support from faculty mentors. The goal of the Final Project is to foster an ongoing dialogue between inquiry, research, writing, and art-making. The learning path integrates multiple disciplines as a means to inform one's artistic process. Students take on the model of the artist pursuing a line of work in his/her own studio. Many students cite this project as the highlight of their Oxbow experience, for it allows them to take full ownership over their work by engaging in a dynamic process of creative experimentation, discovery, and output. The project culminates in an impressive gallery exhibition and short public presentation by each student.



"At Oxbow, I got to try inquiry-based learning for the first time. This allowed me to control the amount of rigor and the depth of research in my topic, as well as picking a topic that I found most interesting. From going through this new process of learning, I feel excited to go back to the rigor of my sending school to apply the inquiry-based perspective to my classes." —Meave, OS33

## **Assessment at Oxbow**

In all disciplines, there is deep emphasis on dialogue, self-reflection, and empathetic critique when evaluating student work. Students are expected to work hard, not for letter grades but because they understand the value of the work. Upon leaving Oxbow and returning to their sending school, most students experience a significant rise in their GPA, for they have learned to develop a rigorous work ethic that is both personally meaningful and intellectually rewarding.

Letter grades and narrative comments are given for coursework in Art, English, History, Science, as well as in the Math and Foreign Language tutorials; a Pass/Fail grade is given for Physical Education. These grades and comments are sent to sending schools and families at mid-semester and at the end of the semester.

See sample transcript next page.



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# SAMPLE

## Final Transcript Spring 2019

**Name** Student Name  
**Address** Student Address  
Student City, State Zip Code  
**ID** Assigned by Database  
**Class** OS40  
**Grade Level** 11 or 12  
**Advisor** Advisor Name  
**Final Status** Completed All Program Requirements

Subject	Teacher(s)	Midterm Grade	Final Grade
Honors Art (2 Semester Credits)	Megan Broughton, Patrick Foy, Pattiann Koury, Chris Thorson	A-	A
Honors English (1 Semester Credit)	Jennifer Jordan	A	A
Honors US History (1 Semester Credit)	Mohammed Elgazzar	A	A
Honors Environmental Science (1 Semester Credit)	Alex Keilty	A	A
Physical Education (1 Semester Credit)	Co-Taught	*	Pass
Spanish I (1 Semester Credit)	Valerie Cook	*	A
Honors Advanced Algebra II (1 Semester Credit)	Greg Levitt	A	A

Students receive one semester credit for academic course work and PE and two semester credits for art.

\*Oxbow does not issue midterm grades for PE or foreign language tutoring.

Terry Schulken, Registrar/Information Manager

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## Sending Schools

Students have come to Oxbow from over 500 public and private schools nationwide, and internationally. Oxbow partners with a limited number of schools that regularly send students to Oxbow and enthusiastically support our mission and vision. Students from Member Schools are given priority in the admissions process and their language tutoring fees are waived.

Most independent schools forgive all or part of the tuition for the semester, and give full credit for the Oxbow curriculum. Please feel free to reach out to the Admissions Office for more information on tuition remission and curriculum.



“Oxbow offers a gold standard of focused project based learning. Beyond the school’s approach to immersive experience are the intangibles, which make Oxbow different. The sense of community and of working together, even as each student retained their strong individual presence is palpable. The feeling of warmth and trust between the adults in the Oxbow community could be felt throughout the campus. The openness of the architecture and interconnectedness of the three studios in themselves speak of the Oxbow philosophy and identity.” —Ken Rush, The Packer Collegiate Institute NY



## Sending School List

This is a partial list of our sending schools. For a full list please visit our website.

### California

Berkeley High School  
Burlingame High School  
Gateway High School  
Head-Royce School  
La Jolla Country Day School  
Lick-Wilmerding School  
Los Angeles High School for the Arts  
Marin School for the Arts  
Nevada Union High School  
Oakland School for the Arts  
Pacific Ridge School  
Palo Alto High School  
San Francisco University High School  
Sir Francis Drake High School  
The Bay School of San Francisco  
The Marin School  
Westridge School

### Connecticut

Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts  
Kent School  
New Cannon High School  
The Forman School

### District of Columbia

Duke Ellington School of the Arts  
National Cathedral School

### Florida

Alexander W. Dreyfoos Jr. School of the Arts

### Georgia

Holy Innocents Episcopal School  
Pace Academy  
Raburn Gap-Nacoochee School  
The Lovett School  
The Westminster Schools  
Woodward Academy

### Illinois

Francis W. Parker School  
Lake Forest High School  
New Trier Township High School  
North Shore Country Day

### Maine

Camden Hills Regional High School  
Freeport High School  
Mount Desert Island High School  
Portland High School

### Maryland

Garrison Forest School  
The Bryn Mawr School  
The Gunston School

### Massachusetts

Boston Arts Academy  
Brookline High School  
Cambridge Rindge & Latin School  
Concord Academy  
Miss Hall's School  
Northampton High School  
Phillips Academy Andover

### Michigan

Interlochen Arts Academy

### Minnesota

Breck School  
Mounds Park Academy  
St. Paul Academy and Summit School  
The Blake School

### New Hampshire

Hanover High School  
Phillips Exeter Academy  
St. Paul's School

### New Jersey

Montclair High School  
The Pingry School  
Newark Academy  
The Lawrenceville School

### New Mexico

Albuquerque Academy  
Bosque School  
Desert Academy  
New Mexico School for the Arts  
Sandia Preparatory Academy  
Santa Fe High School

### New York

Brooklyn Friends School  
Ethical Culture Fieldston School  
Grace Church School  
Horace Mann School  
Riverdale Country Day School  
Saint Ann's School  
The Berkeley Carroll School  
The Dalton School  
The Hewitt School  
The Masters School  
The Packer Collegiate Institute  
Trevor Day School

### Texas

Greenhill School  
St. John's School  
The Hockaday School

### Washington

Bellevue High School  
Garfield High School  
The Northwest School  
University Preparatory Academy

## Life After Oxbow

One of the things we hear most is that students return from Oxbow more confident, informed, and excited about their studies and their futures. Their parents and schools say they stand taller, and seem to be closer to their adult selves. Oxbow students are known to win impressive awards and scholarships in their home states and nationally.

Oxbow alumni go on to complete their high school educations at their home schools, and from there, go on to some of the nation's best colleges and universities. Colleges look favorably on students who have spent a semester away knowing they will have stronger sense of self, and will arrive more prepared than their peers. An impressive list of colleges that alumni have attended can be found on our website.

Oxbow faculty write incredibly meaningful letters of recommendation and are happy to share their experience and advice with students about college choices. Students will engage in personal writing throughout the semester, which will prepare them well for the college essay process. College visits, fairs, and advising are a key part of the Oxbow experience.

For those students interested in pursuing an education in the arts after high school, our Admissions Director is available for consultation during and after the Oxbow semester. Students will learn how to document their work and will have opportunities to meet with representatives from top art colleges. They will also leave Oxbow with a stellar portfolio.

Since 1999, Oxbow alumni have surprised us with their careers and goals. Consistent with our mission, Oxbow alumni are entering varied fields upon graduation from college; some are going on to grad school or medical school, some are going into teaching, some are pursuing careers in social service or the private sector—and some are being artists.

“Every single day since I left Oxbow, I thank the world for giving me the opportunity to go to Oxbow, because of all the things that it gave me. After Oxbow, I was given a new lens to look through, a lens that you have been given as well. You will utilize the fact that you are more open minded, more inquisitive, more curious, more confident, more wise, more creative, more independent.” —Logan, OS31

