Plato

A complement to Foundations of American Thought, this course explores in depth one of the most important authors of the Western canon of great philosophy and literature. The purpose of this class is to introduce students to the founder of Western philosophy, to deepen students’ understanding of ideas such as justice, beauty, virtue, and wisdom, and to complete students’ practice of rhetoric and dialect. The reading list consists of nine of Plato’s greatest dialogues. Students will focus on the philosophical themes highlighted in each text, as well as examine the characters of each drama. They will explore the nature of dialogue as a literary genre, and will practice critical thinking and rhetorical skills through discussion. This course fulfills ten credits of high school philosophy and supplements the world literature studied in other Torrey Academy classes.

Specific Course Objectives:
Students will develop an understanding of Platonic dialogue. They will be able to
- identify the organizing elements of a Platonic dialogue
- identify, explicate, and respond to key themes in Platonic dialogue
- cross-analyze key Platonic themes in other Torrey Academy texts

Students will develop rhetorical and dialectic skills. They will be able to
- do careful dialectic on a variety of subjects
- interpret a written dialogue and choose how to verbally present the characters and content
- identify and implement various methods of elocution and rhetoric

Course objectives will be realized through intensive reading, writing, discussion, and performed dialogue of the students. The discussion and writing assignments (in the form of Pull Questions modeled after the Torrey Honors Institute’s format) will serve as the evaluative tools to assess the students’ progress toward the set objectives. Student notebooks serve as a catalog of the student’s progress though the course of the academic year, and the dialogue is equivalent to a final exam.