

MARCH TERM



2026

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IMPORTANT DATES:

August 28, 2025: March Term fair for students.

September 2, 2025: Virtual March Term info session for families.

September 15, 2025: Travel March Term applications due.

October 6, 2025: Travel course placements shared.

October 10, 2025: Bay Area March Term course selection deadline.

January 12, 2026: Course change request deadline.

March 18 - April 1, 2026: March Term 2026.

April 1, 2026: March Term Exposition, families welcome. (1:30 - 2:30 PM)

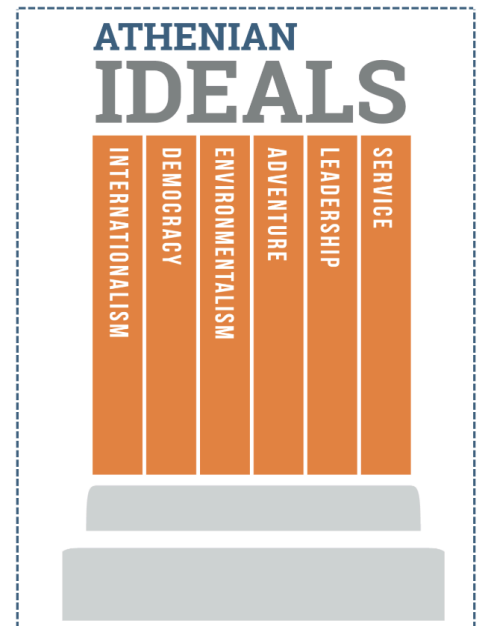
March Term: Immersive Experiential Education

“The curious thing about modern education is how far the learning process has been separated from first-hand experience of the subject learned about...the substitution of words for first hand experience often short circuits the human impulse to explore, understand, and master.”

-Athenian Founder Dyke Brown, 1974

Educational research has shown time and again that the combination of concrete experiences, guided reflections, and student-centered application of new ideas and skills fosters increased student engagement, critical thinking and results in long-term learning outcomes. The principles of experiential education were central to the school's founding and Athenian faculty continue to incorporate them into their classrooms. March Term provides students and faculty a unique chance to go beyond what is possible within the bounds of the usual coursework and schedule, exploring interdisciplinary topics hands-on and in-depth.

Throughout March Term, students collaborate in learning alongside faculty and classmates. Faculty design courses to include Athenian's pillars or IDEALS. In addition to activities and reflection, students are challenged to apply their ideas and learning through projects. Most courses culminate with a final project or product, which are shared with the larger Athenian community during the March Term Expo. Full engagement and participation is necessary to capitalize on the opportunity a March Term course presents. Work outside of class is intentionally minimal to support full engagement. Because students do not receive a letter grade for their March Term course, they tend to take more risks which can lead to incredible growth and the discovery of new interests.



For those wanting to learn more about the principles and value of experiential education, here are some resources:

- [“What is Experiential Education?”](#) from the Association for Experiential Education
- [“Experiential Learning”](#) from Northern Illinois University’s Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning
- [“Introduction to Experiential Learning”](#) from Northeastern University’s Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning through Research
- [“It’s in the Experience”](#) podcasts from the Association for Experiential Education

Attendance and Engagement

Although regular classes halt, March Term is an integral and graded part of Athenian's academic curriculum. Students are required to participate in their assigned March Term course, except for those participating in AWE Death Valley. Upper School attendance policies for absences and tardies apply during March Term. Because of the immersive nature of March Term, any student who misses more than two days will be in jeopardy of failing their course. Students, including seniors, should not schedule college visits or travel during this time.

Course Selection and Assignment

March Term creates a unique opportunity to build community across grade levels and friend groups. In most cases, courses will include mixed-grade level groups.

During course assignments, we do our best to honor one of your top five choices, but we cannot guarantee that students will be given their top choice. Factors that influence course assignment include:

- Program capacity: Each individual course can accommodate a specific number of students.
- Previous participation: Students may not participate in the same March Term course twice.
- Essay questions: Travel Course selection relies heavily on student engagement as shown through application responses.
- Grade level: Mixed-grade courses are a priority. Grade level seniority is taken into consideration while maintaining the opportunity to build community across grades.

Financial Considerations

The cost of most Bay Area courses is included in tuition. Courses that include multi-day travel—whether Bay Area or Travel Courses—have an additional cost listed in their course descriptions. The published price is our best estimation, though the final cost will depend on enrollment and actual trip expenses. These costs are inclusive of transportation, activities, accommodations and meals.

When applicable, billing for March Term courses will happen through MyAthenian accounts.

Financial Assistance

Students receiving financial aid may request financial assistance. Although funds are limited, we strive to support student access to Global Education through need-based assistance and are committed to providing support so that every student receiving financial

aid can have one travel experience during their time at Athenian. The selection process for travel courses is completed separately from financial aid requests.

Once selected for a Travel Course, the business office will review and communicate financial aid requests and decisions. Families will have the opportunity to accept or decline their student's spot on the course after they are notified of their support. In general, financial aid for travel is provided at the same percentage as a student's tuition support and students are only eligible for aid for one major trip while attending the Upper School.

Recommendations for Course Selections

March Term is a wonderful opportunity to try something totally new or pursue a passion that you don't have time for during the traditional academic schedule. We encourage you to think about the following when ranking your course selections:

- What do you want to learn or try?
 - Each course includes unique learning opportunities. Review the descriptions to find courses that provide new ways of thinking, new activities, or technical skills you would like to develop.
 - All courses are oriented towards the Athenian Pillars of Internationalism, Democracy, Environmentalism, Adventure, Leadership, and Service. Consider which areas you are most interested in honing and select courses that highlight those pillars.
- What are your limitations?
 - Potential limitations include scheduling, transportation, extracurricular activities, athletic schedules, health and wellness, etc.
 - Where appropriate, course descriptions include specific program needs like overnight travel, early or later hours, physical activities, and other considerations. Please review these prior to course selection.
 - Reach out to individual course instructors before course selection to enquire about any specific limitations or situations you have questions or concerns about.
- Expand your circle
 - March Term is a great opportunity to pursue something interesting or new to you. Students are encouraged to use this as an opportunity to get to know subjects, faculty, or students that they are less familiar with.

Course Selection Process

Bay Area Courses

Course Selection Survey Deadline: October 10, 2025

All Upper School students will be emailed a March Term Selection Form to complete on October 10, 2025. Prior to completing this form, students should review the course descriptions in this catalog and connect with faculty teaching courses they would like to know more about. Students are asked to rank five or more courses in order of preference.

All students should complete the Course Selection Form. This includes those participating in Death Valley AWE or accepted into a travel course. For those already enrolled in a travel course or AWE, the form serves as a backup in case of unanticipated changes in a student's plans.

Travel Courses

Travel Course [Application](#) Deadline: September 15, 2025

Travel courses are opportunities for cultural immersion, developing global citizenship, networking with peers from different backgrounds, and improving language skills. Students on a travel course are expected to demonstrate a dedication to Athenian's mission and pillars, a readiness to connect with people from diverse cultures with empathy and understanding, a willingness to push outside of one's comfort zone, and the ability to adapt to new situations.

This year Athenian is offering seven travel courses for March Term, with two domestic and five international courses. Each course promises to be an amazing learning experience through a deep dive into a culture or topic.

The application and selection process for travel courses is slightly more involved than regular course selection. There is a [common application form](#) for all the March Term travel courses, and students may apply for more than one course. Students should provide a rationale of their interest for each course they are applying for. The quality of responses is a significant factor in the travel course selection process.

There will be a virtual information session about this year's travel courses for parents on Tuesday, September 2 from 7:00 to 8:00 PM. [Here's the link](#) to the virtual info session on Zoom. Meeting ID: 942 1170 6580. Passcode: 2100.

You may also reach out to leaders of individual courses if you want more information or have specific questions. If you have general questions about March Term travel courses, contact Athenian's Global Education Director, Mark Friedman, at mfriedman@athenian.org.

Commitment - The application represents a commitment on the part of the student to go on the trip if their application is accepted (unless also applying for financial aid). Applying for a travel course is a commitment to the entirety of the course, including any pre-travel or post-travel work. If you are on a spring sports team, committing to a travel course could

affect your playing time, starting status, or position, as you will likely miss practices and games.

Parent or Guardian Approval - After you submit this application, Athenian will send an email to your parents / guardians with a link to a Google form for them to 1) confirm their approval of your applying, 2) upload a copy of your passport, if applying for an international course, and 3) request financial aid, if applying for aid.

Pre-Course Meetings

All March Term courses will have meetings during the academic day the first week of January and the first week of March. Travel courses and internship advisors will schedule additional meetings with students and families to prepare. These are a critical component to the travel and intern experiences.

Course Changes

Because of the dynamic nature of March Term, it is difficult to accommodate course changes as the number of students has a significant impact on faculty planning and coordination of field trips, transportation, classroom spaces and materials.

If changes are unavoidable, travel course assignment changes must be coordinated through the Global Education Director. Once a commitment to travel has been made, there are non-refundable costs associated with dropping a course. This should be taken into consideration when enrolling in a course.

For Bay Area courses, students will be given access to a Course Change Request Form when course assignments are shared. The deadline to complete this form is Monday, January 12, 2025. The Dean of Experiential Education will communicate the status of requests in late January. Because of course capacity and logistics, students may be unable to change into the course they are requesting. Students will be able to request waitlist placement for one Bay Area course after course changes are considered. After January 12, course change requests require documented extenuating circumstances.

Further information

For course-specific information, please reach out to the course instructors. For broader March Term questions, contact Beth Spencer, Dean of Experiential Education at bspencer@athenian.org. For broader travel course related questions, contact Mark Friedman, Director of Global Education at mfriedman@athenian.org.

March Term 2026 Courses

Bay Area Courses

[Cultivating Joy](#)

[Exercise Science](#)

[Flour Power](#)

[Game On](#)

[Get Lost](#)

[Iconic Bay Area Artists for Change](#)

[Internships for Community Engagement](#)

[Itadakimasu](#)

[Local Legends: Julia Morgan & California Architecture](#)

[Oakland: History, Art, & Culture](#)

[Peak2Peak](#)

[Recording Studio](#)

[Reimagining the Museum](#)

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[Taste the Cultures of the Bay](#)

[The World Cup-Soccer in the Bay Area!](#)

Travel Courses

[Arts & Culture in the Iberian Peninsula](#)

[Hidden Jewels of California Parks](#)

[History and Culture of Ghana](#)

[Iceland: Frontiers of Geology and Climate Change](#)

[Ichigo Ichie: Walk Japan](#)

[Immigration and the Rio Grande Valley](#)

[¡Vamos a Guatemala! Language Immersion and Service](#)

Bay Area Courses

Cultivating Joy

with Jamie Julin and Leslie Cushner

Service is joy! We will be immersing ourselves in service and reflecting on the true nature of service as a reciprocal relationship between equals. We will step out of our comfort zones and connect with communities outside of Athenian, making a difference every day and cultivating joy through our work. Most days, we will be working with different organizations in the Bay Area. When on campus, we will have time to learn and reflect on how service benefits everyone. We will spend two days and one night at Green Gulch Farm practicing Zen meditation and working in the garden. Join us to see how this work will give you a sense of joy and fulfillment!

Special Considerations:

Course days are scheduled around host organization needs. Some days will start and end earlier than the typical March Term schedule. Other days may start and end later than the March Term schedule. Specific dates and times will be shared prior to March Term.



Exercise Science

with Darek Cliff, Kathy Papastephanou, and Zach Holt

Are you interested in learning more about the physiology of exercise? How does the human body respond to it? What's the best way to get stronger, faster, or recover after a tough workout?

This course investigates the anatomy and physiology of exercise and its effects on the human body. Students will learn about the body systems that are involved in exercise and explore various forms of exercise, such as strength training, yoga, HIIT, and CrossFit, to name a few. We will also examine how the body responds to exercise, such as how muscles get stronger and how cardiovascular capacity increases, as well as how the body recovers after exercise – and students will have the



opportunity to try recovery methods such as cryotherapy. Students will have the chance to analyze best practices that are trending in the world of exercise science and decide what works best for them and their bodies. Opportunities to design and lead group workouts will also emphasize Athenian's leadership pillar.

Most days will include a workout relating to the topics being covered in the course that day. Being a strong athlete is NOT a requirement – students of ALL fitness levels and abilities are encouraged to sign up. Students signing up for this class should expect to show up with a good attitude, use their bodies every day, and do their best!

Flour Power

with Britt SchlaeGuada, Hannah Sugarman, and Bekah Bryant

Come join a crew of crafty bread enthusiasts while learning about the history of breads, the cultural importance of breads, and of course making and EATING delicious breads from around the world! Most days on campus we will focus on baking a unique bread and working on/completing a craft project related to baking, bread, or kitchen tools inspired by international art styles related to the breads we are baking. This course will also feature two to three different Bay Area field trips to learn about bread from local professional bakers and taste breads from different cultural traditions. Join Britt, Hannah, and Bekah on an edible, intellectual, and exciting adventure through the ages and stages of bread!



Special Considerations:

This course is not recommended for those who cannot eat gluten or choose not to eat bread!

Game On

with Peter Bonfanti and Sawyer Thompson

What makes something a game? What makes a game compelling? And, the mystery that this class is ultimately hoping to unlock: how do you make a compelling game that people will want to play?

This class is all about games: where they come from, why we love them, and how they are developed. We will look at a wide array of tabletop games to explore themes for what makes games so darn fun to play. From Monopoly to Exploding Kittens to Terraforming Mars, we'll explore the full range of possibilities, refamiliarizing ourselves with old favorites and exposing ourselves to the wide range of mechanics, formats, and complexities modern board games have to offer.



The bulk of this class will focus on designing, testing, and making your own game, with your own rule set and your own aesthetic. Utilizing the resources of the CIS, you will produce a polished and well-tested tabletop board game that you can play with your family and friends.

In addition to playing, deconstructing, and building games, we will also look at the societal impacts of games. For example, who are games made for? How can we make games more inclusive? And also, why can games be so addictive, and how can we have more balanced relationships with games?

Get Lost

with Lea Hartog and Maria Luca

Where have you been? Where are you going? How are you getting there? An individual's life is defined by the paths one takes, chosen and unchosen. In this interdisciplinary March Term, we will examine how people and animals have created trails to navigate a variety of environments and obstacles. We will learn how the first peoples of California navigated this landscape; how parks have designed trail systems for a variety of audiences; and examine animal-created routes throughout our state. From finding spiritual purpose to discovering new landscapes, we will study the many different purposes trails serve for the



world's diverse populations. We will spend 3 days camping in Samuel J Taylor State Park to learn how people created trails in this beautiful area as well as how the park is supporting salmon spawns. In addition, we will support our California parks by conducting trail maintenance with Save Mount Diablo. Students should be prepared to spend a lot of time outside, do moderate hikes, get pumped about camping, and be open to new adventures outdoors. The course will culminate with students designing a new trail for someone - or something - that needs it.

Special Considerations:

This course includes a camping trip from Wednesday, March 25 to Friday, March 27.

Iconic Bay Area Artists for Change

with Peter Tamaribuchi, Laura Ellis, and Gabe del Real

Filmmaking for Change presents this exciting course in which we'll explore how Bay Area artists are using their creativity to spark meaningful social change. Together, we'll have the opportunity to meet and interview some of the influential voices in film, theater, dance, and beyond. We're planning to connect with inspiring artists such as Laura E. Ellis, award-winning choreographer, dancer, and



Executive Director of the African & African American Performing Arts Coalition (AAPAC); acclaimed filmmaker Ryan Coogler, director of *Sinners* and Marvel's *Black Panther*; Sundance award-winning director Pete Nicks, creator of the Stephen Curry documentary *Underrated*; and celebrated writer, director, performer, and Artistic Director of the iconic Magic Theatre, Sean San José—among others. (Final guest artists may vary, but all will reflect the Bay Area's vibrant talent and deep commitment to social change.)

Through conversations with these groundbreaking artists, we'll gain insight into how art can shape communities, inspire justice, and transform culture. As a class, we'll then create our own short documentary to showcase the incredible talent and impact of artists working right here in the Bay Area.

No prior experience in filmmaking is required—just a passion for the arts, social change, or a sense of curiosity about the world. Together, we'll build community, engage with inspiring role models, and collaborate on a project that highlights the powerful connection between creativity and positive change.

Come ready for discovery, storytelling, and inspiration—it's going to be an unforgettable journey!

Internships for Community Engagement

with Rostislov Smirnov and Sana Shukairy

The March Term Internship offers students a unique opportunity to step outside the classroom and immerse themselves in real-world experiences. Whether exploring a potential career, pursuing new interests, or seeking hands-on learning, this course helps students connect their passions with professional practice. Through work in a business, nonprofit, creative field, or public service, students apply their academic knowledge in practical settings while building essential skills in problem-solving, communication, and time management.

Each student is expected to secure their own internship placement, which involves researching opportunities, initiating contact with potential hosts, and preparing professional application materials. This process cultivates initiative, professionalism, and independence, embodying Athenian's mission to develop self-reliant individuals who contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Special Considerations:

- Students in this course will be assigned an Athenian intern advisor. They will meet at least monthly with this advisor beginning in November.
- Internships will need to be found and finalized by the return from Winter Break. Students unable to secure a 75-hour internship placement by January will be reassigned to a Bay Area March Term course.
- There will be a required meeting for students who express interest in this course on Thursday, October 23, 2025 during C&C in the Urban Conference Room.

Itadakimasu

with Stephanie Kim, Michelle Park, and John Hayden

This course takes a deep dive into why we eat what we eat during certain cultural holidays and traditions. We will explore culture, history, religion, origins, languages, and traditions, all while learning culinary skills and partaking in the various cuisines. Some examples include studying why Koreans eat seaweed soup on their birthdays, what goes on a Jewish Seder plate and why, what the origin is behind mooncakes and why the Chinese eat them during the mid-autumn festival, how and why Indian communities observe Diwali and what foods are shared at this time. This course takes full advantage of the bountiful culinary diversity that exists in the bay area by



including field trips to local restaurants in addition to offering opportunities for cooking demonstrations and presentations.

This experiential course connects with our international and multicultural understanding pillar and will provide our students with a glimpse of cultural traditions and the origins that exist in our vast world.

Local Legends: Julia Morgan & California Architecture

with JeeYeun Kim and Annie Potter

Julia Morgan: pioneer, visionary, and California's first licensed female architect—her influence is etched into the landscape of the Bay Area and beyond. From the dramatic curves of Hearst Castle to the quiet elegance of the Chapel of the Chimes, Morgan's work blended structural brilliance with artistic sensitivity, drawing from the Arts & Crafts movement to create spaces of both beauty and resilience. Join in tracing her legacy through the buildings she designed and the movements that shaped her vision.

We begin on campus with an introduction to Julia Morgan's life, her architectural philosophy, and the broader context of California architecture. From there, we'll venture out to key Morgan-designed landmarks, including a guided tour of UC Berkeley and an exploration of Mills College or the Chapel of the Chimes. The centerpiece of our experience will be a two-day overnight trip to San Simeon and Pacific Grove, where we'll visit the legendary Hearst Castle and the tranquil Asilomar Conference Grounds—two of Morgan's most iconic projects.

Back on campus, you'll engage in hands-on design studios that incorporate principles of structural engineering and seismic design, alongside explorations of the Arts & Crafts movement. We will end with a collaborative design challenge in which you'll build original structures or models inspired by Morgan's legacy. These final projects will be shared at the March Term Fair.

Special Considerations:

This course includes a two-day overnight trip to Hearst Castle and Asilomar. We may return to campus later than 3pm on two other days. Dates will be confirmed in January.



Oakland: History, Art, & Culture

with Trish Ludovici, Emily Raymundo

Oakland, Oak-Town, the Town - these are just a few of the ways Oaklanders lovingly refer to their city. One of the most diverse cities in the United States, Oakland is known for many things: its history of activism, its thriving art scene, its stunning bay views, and its perfect Mediterranean weather.

In this course, we will peel back the many layers of Oakland's history and culture through a deep dive into its diverse neighborhoods. We start our course up in the Oakland Hills with an overnight camping trip among California's majestic redwoods at Redwood Regional Park. We then journey to different neighborhoods each day as we explore Oakland on foot, by train, by boat, and possibly even by bike! We won't just be touring through Oakland, however; we will immerse ourselves within and "experience" the city - from making art together, to working at an urban farm, to paddle boating in Lake Merritt—the nation's oldest designated wildlife refuge, to dining in some of Oakland's most famously delicious restaurants. We will learn about the long history of activism within Oakland along the way, helping us contextualize the town we see today.

Students will synthesize their learning through collaborative art projects about Oakland, which we will sell as a fundraiser for an Oakland nonprofit chosen by the class.

Special Considerations:

We may return to campus later than 3pm twice during the course. Dates will be confirmed in January.



Peak2Peak

with Mark Lukach and Kristel Hansen

Peak2Peak is a local adventure course which challenges students to explore familiar surroundings in a unique way. At its essence, the course is a six-day expedition that starts at Athenian and takes students to the two most iconic peaks in the Bay Area: Mt Diablo and Mt Tamalpais. Students will design the route of the trip, with straightforward parameters: you need to make the journey without cars and without phones.

Peak2Peak will challenge students physically as well as intellectually and aesthetically. We will slowly walk through areas which we usually speed through in cars without the distraction that phones offer. This intentional opportunity will be our entry into the science and philosophy of attention: the awareness of, and choice in, what we think about. Throughout the course we will study this as we read from thinkers who have celebrated walking as a means of meditation. And finally, the course will enrich your appreciation of the Bay Area, both through reading about it, and also navigating the public infrastructure. Beyond these abstract concepts, students will learn skills in journaling, navigation, planning, and budgeting.

If you're into maps, urban exploration and planning, the outdoors, mindfulness, or just want a break from your phone for a week, this course is for you.

Special Considerations:

This is a hiking intensive course. Although the course runs throughout March Term, backpacking will begin on Sunday, March 22 with our return to campus on Friday, March 27.

Recording Studio

with Alex Mattraw and Ken Berman

Have you ever wanted to have your music recorded in a professional studio? In this March term, students will experience what it is like to be part of a professional recording session, from rehearsal and set-up to recording to mixing and mastering. Students will participate in workshops in songwriting, composition, and arranging where they learn the basics of music theory, and ultimately compose a number of original pieces of music for our recording session. We will then travel to Skyline Studios in Oakland to record and engineer a professional demo. During the process we will videotape our sessions and create music



videos of our finished material to share with the community, along with the digital demo recording. Vocalists, instrumentalists, and singer-songwriters are welcome.

Special Considerations:

This course is an opportunity to use and hone developed skills in writing and recording your own music. Because this course does not teach instrumental or vocal skills, it is recommended you have at least one year of experience on your instrument. See Ken with questions.



Reimagining the Museum

with Catherine Lu and Rebecca Lee

This course will give students the opportunity to explore museums in the Bay Area; to think critically about the cultural and social functions of museums; and to curate and design an original “museum exhibit.” The curriculum will include a mix of on-campus activities and local trips. On campus, students will consider the cultural and social functions of museums to the communities they inhabit through a number of readings and digital “trips” to online museum exhibitions. Off campus, students will take trips to local museums large and small, perhaps including SFMOMA; the Legion of Honor; the California Academy of Sciences; the Computer History Museum; the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum; the DeYoung; the Blackhawk Museum; the Angel Island Immigration Station; and the Mt. Diablo Summit Museum.

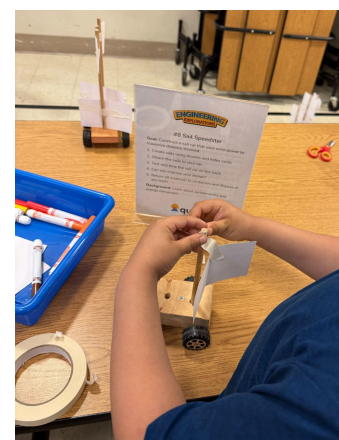
Students will critically examine museum guides and maps; explore a range of written responses to art, including the ekphrastic piece, the exhibition review, and the wall label; and, finally, read articles and essays that theorize the museum as space and idea. Students will finish the March term with a capstone project that asks them to create their own exhibit, focused on one or more objects of their own choosing.

STEAM as Service

with Urmila Padmanabhan, Emily Welch, and Lakshmi Warriar

Spark curiosity, creativity, and meaningful learning in young students through Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM)—all while living the Athenian pillars of Service and Leadership!

We’ll kick off by visiting some of the Bay Area’s most engaging and hands-on museums—the Exploratorium, Lawrence Hall of Science, and the Children’s Creativity Museum—to discover what makes their interactive exhibits both fun and educational. Using



what we learn, you'll work in teams to design your own interactive experiments and activities for children in each STEAM category. Once your workshop is ready, you'll take it on the road to two local elementary schools, engaging young learners in the hands-on activities and experiments you've created.

This course is a great chance to get creative, learn a new skill in the CIS (Innovation Studio), and demonstrate leadership while delving into Math, Art, Engineering, Technology, and Science.

Special Considerations:

STEAM workshops will be scheduled to meet the timing of our elementary school partners, with return to campus as late as 8 pm. Dates and times for the workshops will be shared with enrolled students in early January.

Taste the Cultures of the Bay

With April Smock and Hanwey Wong

As an international region, the Bay Area boasts the most diverse population on the West coast. In this March term, you will learn to appreciate the cultural diversity of this area through cooking and eating delicious fare from a wide array of cultures in the Bay. In addition to trying the cultural foods represented by the students in the course, we will spend days shopping in culturally specific food markets and cooking meals with community members. Through this experience, you will gain a deeper understanding of some of the cultures that influence the Bay Area's world-renowned cuisine.



This March Term will give you the opportunity to cooperatively cultivate a delicious cuisine, delight in the zesty flavors of diverse foods, and explore cultures through one of its most defining features ... food! In our culminating activity, we will bring a favorite dish from our own families and enjoy a potluck of delicious cuisine together.

The World Cup-Soccer in the Bay Area!

with Robert Nelson and Seve Morris

Get ready for the world's biggest sporting event—right here in the Bay Area! This March Term, dive deep into the beautiful game and prepare for the FIFA Men's World Cup 2026.

Whether you're a seasoned player or have never kicked a ball, you'll explore soccer's global magic from every angle—the thrill of the players, the passion of the fans, and the behind-the-scenes work that makes the sport a worldwide phenomenon.

You'll connect with local pro teams like the Oakland Roots and Bay FC, tour Levi's Stadium (a 2026 World Cup venue!), and take part in service projects to make the game more accessible for everyone. Feel the energy at professional and amateur matches, and see firsthand why billions love this sport. Then, bring it home—design fun, community-focused events for Athenian to celebrate and compete during the World Cup.

Soccer is more than a game. This is your chance to be part of its story.

Special Considerations:

There will likely be evening or weekend classes in order to attend soccer matches. Details will be shared with students as teams release their schedules.

Travel Courses

Arts & Culture in the Iberian Peninsula

with Sally Baker and John Harvey

On this overseas trip you'll develop your artistic skills and understanding as you explore the arts, culture and architecture of Portugal and Spain. This twelve-day journey will be led by teachers fluent in the local languages and with deep knowledge of the artistic and historical richness of both countries. Portugal, though small, offers a layered and captivating history alongside a vibrant and evolving arts tradition.



The trip begins in Lisbon, a city where centuries-old monuments stand beside modern art spaces and bustling neighborhoods. Shortly after arrival, we'll explore the historic center and begin to immerse ourselves in the rhythm of the city. We'll visit the Jerónimos Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and take time to enjoy its surrounding gardens. Not far from there, we'll stop at the birthplace of the iconic Pastel de Nata before heading to the MAAT Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology for a unique perspective on how heritage and innovation can coexist.

A day trip to Sintra offers a chance to hike along the ancient walls of the Moorish Castle and explore either Quinta da Regaleira, with its mysterious symbolism and underground

passageways, or the romantic Palácio de Monserrate, a palace that inspired many including Lord Byron. In nearby Cascais, we'll visit Casa das Histórias Paula Rego, dedicated to one of Portugal's most celebrated contemporary artists, as well as other cultural spaces that reflect the region's creative energy.

Our engagement with contemporary practice continues at the Gulbenkian Foundation's Modern Art Center (CAM), where we'll enjoy a private reception with the director of the foundation. We'll then take part in hands-on art workshops at AR.CO, one of Portugal's leading independent art schools. Across two intensive days, we'll work with local artists and educators, exploring techniques and ideas while also contributing to a service project that reinforces art's connection to the local community. These workshops will take place at AR.CO's campuses in Almada and Xabregas and will be complemented by a visit to the National Tile Museum, where we'll see how this traditional Portuguese art form continues to influence contemporary Expression.



On our way north to Porto, we'll stop in the medieval town of Óbidos, known for its whitewashed houses, literary festivals, and lively atmosphere. As we continue along the Atlantic coast, we'll visit Nazaré, a traditional fishing village that has become internationally known as the site of the biggest surfable waves in the world. From there, we make our way to Porto, a city defined by its tiled facades and architectural beauty. In Porto, we'll visit the Serralves Foundation—one of Portugal's most important institutions for modern and contemporary art, housed in an Art Deco villa surrounded by lush parklands. We'll explore the historic center on foot and cross the river to see the city from another perspective. The beautiful Lello bookstore will provide yet another example of how art and architecture blend seamlessly in everyday life.

The trip will conclude in Madrid, where we'll turn our focus to the extraordinary legacy of Spanish painting and its role in European art history. We'll visit the Prado Museum to study masterpieces by Velázquez, Goya, and El Greco, then move to the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum for a broader perspective on European movements from the Renaissance through modernity. At the Reina Soda Museum, we'll engage with 20th-century and contemporary Spanish art, including Picasso's iconic *Guernica*.



Throughout the trip, we'll sketch, observe, reflect, and connect. From tiled churches to avant-garde museums, from medieval alleyways to masterful paintings, this immersive experience invites a deeper understanding of how art, architecture, and history continue to shape the identity and imagination of the Iberian Peninsula.

Special considerations:

Projected Travel Dates: March 18-29, 2026

Projected Cost: \$7,000 - \$7,200

- For more information, contact Sally at sbaker@athenian.org.

Hidden Jewels of California Parks

with Howard Kaplan and Molly Gowen

Get off the beaten path and into some of California's best-kept secrets. This immersive course takes you deep into the wild heart of some of the state's lesser-known parks—Channel Island National Park, Pinnacles National Park, and Lava Beds National Monument. Through camping adventures, geology hikes, and outdoor challenges, you'll explore volcanic landscapes and coastal cliffs that most tourists never see. Along the way, we'll uncover the layered history of these lands—from the forces that shaped them over millions of years to the Indigenous communities who have stewarded them for generations.



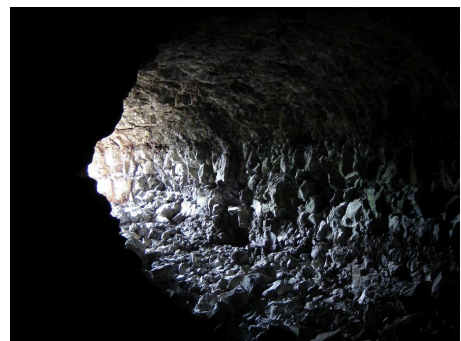
Through hands-on fieldwork, journal reflections, and group readings, you'll gain a richer understanding of the parks not just as natural wonders, but as living, contested, and evolving spaces. Whether you're scaling cinder cones, decoding rock layers, or cooking dinner under the stars, this is an unforgettable journey into the stories the guidebooks leave out.

Special considerations:

Projected Travel Dates: March 18-30, 2026 with two nights at home March 25 and 26

Projected Cost: \$1,400 - \$1,600

- The trip includes 9 nights of camping and some moderately strenuous hiking. It also involves ferry boat rides to and from the Channel Islands over possibly rough seas.
- For more information, contact Howard at hkaplan@athenian.org.



History and Culture of Ghana

with Becky Cebula and Victoria Akinsanya

Athenian is partnering with EduAfrica to explore the rich culture and history of Ghana, on the west coast of Africa. Ghana takes its name from the great medieval trading empire known as the Ghana Empire. It was founded by the Akan Ethnic group in the 13th century. The empire was rich in gold and traded widely with the Portuguese, Dutch, English, and others between the 15th and 16th centuries.



This made it become known as the Gold Coast. The 17th century saw a shift into the slave trade, with devastating effects on the country and huge implications for modern world history.

Ghana was the first African country south of the Sahara to gain independence from the colonial rule of the British in 1957. Its revolution was led by the nationalist and Pan-Africanist Kwame Nkrumah, and the country has since become a model for African economic recovery and political reform. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing employ more than half of the population.

Ghana has a rich indigenous culture with people groups such as the Ewe, Fante, Nzema, and Ga Dambe, all with close ties to religion and institutions of chieftaincy. About 50 indigenous languages are spoken, the major ones being Akan, Ewe, Ga, Dagaare, and Dagbani. English is the official language. Harvest season, marriage, birth, puberty, and death call for various festivals and rites.



We'll investigate the diverse communities that call Ghana home, focusing on how the cities of Accra, Kumasi, and Elmina have evolved from the legacies of colonialism and the slave trade to address contemporary issues of identity and culture. We'll explore how globalization has transformed business trends, positioning Ghana as one of the world's leading producers of high-quality sun-dried cocoa. We'll engage with community members to gain insights into traditional livelihoods, and participate in service learning activities alongside peers from a local school. Throughout the program, you'll develop the skills needed to ask respectful and insightful questions and broaden your worldview in the process.

Through this experience, you'll gain an understanding of colonialism and the impact of the slave trade on Ghana's economy, history, and culture while experiencing how different cultural groups coexist in the nation today. It will be challenging as we'll be visiting historical sites centered around the slave trade.

Significant Historical and Cultural Site Visits:

- W.E.B. Dubois Centre
- Jamestown
- Makola Market
- Ntonso Craft Village
- Bamang Naming Ceremony
- Cocoa Farm
- Assin Manso Ancestral River
- Ntonso Craft Village
- Manhiya Palace
- Elmina Township and Castle
- Adom Water Falls
- Aburi Garden

Special Considerations:

Projected Travel Dates: March 19 to 31, 2026

Projected Cost: \$7,600 - \$7,800

- Athenian students need a visa to travel to Ghana, which includes providing proof of yellow fever vaccination and shipping your passport to the Ghanaian embassy in Washington, DC. Athenian will coordinate this process in early January.
- We will be visiting potentially triggering or traumatic areas/sites such as Assin Manso, Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castle. Faculty will always be available for support as students navigate through and process these experiences and their emotions.
- Come with an open mind and flexible attitude! Navigating the cultural and infrastructural differences in Ghana will be challenging; you will be expected to meet these differences with respect and dignity in all circumstances.
- Expect to meet as a group several times ahead of our departure and to read one book about the history and cultures in the region.
- For more information, contact Becky at rcebula@athenian.org.



Iceland: Frontiers of Geology and Climate Change

with Adam Thorman and Stephanie McGraw

Come join us in Iceland, the land of fire and ice, to experience the raw beauty of nature and learn about climate change firsthand! We'll be up close and personal with glaciers, exploring the geology of how earth's land formed, visiting a geothermal power plant to learn about sustainable energy solutions, visiting giant waterfalls, geysers, hot springs, and possibly even an active volcano! This trip will be a deep dive into the Environmentalism and Outdoor Adventure pillars of Athenian. Iceland is one of the best places to not only see the effects of climate change, but to also learn about real world working solutions. We'll be using photography and journals to track our learning to bring it back to the Athenian community to share what we've learned.



Iceland is a truly special place. It is relatively new geologically, so it has been an important place for geologists to go study how our continents formed. It is home to 13 large glaciers, many of which are accessible to visit, and where you can see the effects of global warming in real time. The volcanic nature of the area means that the water comes out hot and Iceland is a world leader in geothermal energy. The country is visually stunning, and a treat for any photographer. We will use photography to execute projects to help share our first-hand learning with the broader community of Athenian when we return.

- Visit the Hellisheidi Power Plant to get a first-hand look at how geothermal energy powers the city.
- Get to know Iceland's Golden Circle with a special focus on the power of Earth's natural systems, including striking geysers and glacier-fed waterfalls.
- Have lunch at a geothermal tomato farm to learn how Icelanders have adapted to optimize the resources they have.
- Look out over the continental divide at Thingvellir, one of few places where you can see tectonic plates converge above ground.
- Take in views of the Mýrdalsjökull glacier and get a local's take on how glacial melt and rising seas are changing the area.



- Experience simulated lava flow and learn about the Katla volcano.
- See the glacial lake at Vatnajökull and Diamond Beach, and consider the bittersweet connection of this picturesque stream to the glacier above.
- Hike to a basalt-framed waterfall in the Skaftafell Nature Reserve.
- Explore Reykjavik, including visiting the incredible Harpa Concert Hall and take a dip in one of the many geothermally heated lagoons.
- Try the traditional foods of Iceland

Special Considerations:

Projected Travel Dates: March 19 to 25, 2026

Projected Cost: \$7,700 - \$7,950

- The packing list will include cold weather adventure apparel.
- For more information, contact Adam at athorman@athenian.org.

Ichigo Ichie: Walk Japan

with Kimiko Sera-Tacorda and Naoko Akiyama

Ichigo ichie—a Japanese phrase meaning “one moment, one encounter”—comes from the tea ceremony tradition and reminds us to treasure each unrepeatable moment. This spirit will guide our walking journey along the historic Nakasendo Way, where students will slow down, connect deeply with Japan’s history, culture, and people, and experience traditions that have endured for centuries.

Our route broadly follows the Nakasendo (“Central Mountain Route”), a key Edo-period (1603–1868) road linking Kyoto to Edo (now Tokyo). For four centuries, feudal lords, merchants, artists, and travelers have walked this route; in March, Athenian students will also leave their footprints on this well-trodden path! Along the way, we’ll take part in a tea ceremony, fabric dyeing, Zen meditation, soba making, and other hands-on experiences. Nights will be spent in atmospheric inns. We’ll share meals with locals and reflect on each day’s encounters.



The journey begins with two and a half days in Kyoto, continues with four and a half days walking through the villages, forests, and mountain passes of the Nakasendo, and ends with three and a half days in Tokyo—ideally timed for cherry blossoms. We will experience many aspects of Japanese daily life, including sleeping on futons, bathing in wooden baths, eating while sitting on tatami floors, and riding on local and high-speed trains. A community project

in the village of Kawaue will offer us a chance to give back. On our final day, students will lead their own ichigo ichie activity.

We are partnering with Walk Japan and Real Asia, specialists in guided group tours in Japan. We'll be accompanied by an experienced local guide throughout the trip. Join us to experience ichigo ichie!

Course highlights :

- The Nakasendo Way's historic post towns, checkpoints, and scenic landscapes
- Kyoto's Nijo-jo Castle (a UNESCO World Heritage site), Ginkakuji Temple, and Heian Jingu Shrine
- Hands-on experiences such as a tea ceremony with a tea master, fabric dyeing, soba and sushi-making, and kiriko glass-cutting
- Dinner at Kyoto's Nishiki Market
- Stroll along the Philosopher's Path under cherry blossoms
- Traditional inns: yukata robes, wooden thermal baths, and tatami-room dinners
- Community project in Kawaue village
- Kiso-Fukushima wooden toy museum
- High-speed shinkansen train ride
- Tokyo's Sensoji Temple, Nakamise-dori, Tsukiji Fish Market, and a picnic at Ueno Park under the cherry blossoms
- City walks exploring convenience stores, vending machines, and seasonal goods
- Harajuku's Takeshita-dori and nearby Meiji-jingu Shrine
- Shibuya's Scramble Crossing—the busiest pedestrian intersection in the world



Special Considerations:

Projected Travel Dates: March 19-31, 2026

Projected Cost: \$7,900 - \$8,100

- You should be able to comfortably hike three to four hours per day. In general, the route is gently undulating but also includes some short, steeper climbs. One of our hikes may require snow shoes, which would be provided by our local guide. We will stay in country inns and city hotels.
- In Japan, ending the day with a bath is a cherished ritual—part cleansing, part deep relaxation. Many of the accommodations on our trip feature onsen, natural thermal baths. These baths are public spaces, separated by gender, and are entered without swimsuits. A small modesty towel will be provided. While many travelers find the onsen to be a highlight of their visit, we understand it can feel unfamiliar. For those

who prefer more privacy, we can request a bathing rotation so smaller groups have the space to themselves, but those who are unaccustomed to communal bathing may feel some discomfort. Tour guides and teachers never bathe with students.

- Beginning in January, students will attend weekly group meetings to prepare for the trip, learning about Japanese culture and practicing a few Japanese phrases. This will also allow our group to get to know each other before we embark on our adventure.
- For more information, contact Kimiko at ksara@athenian.org.

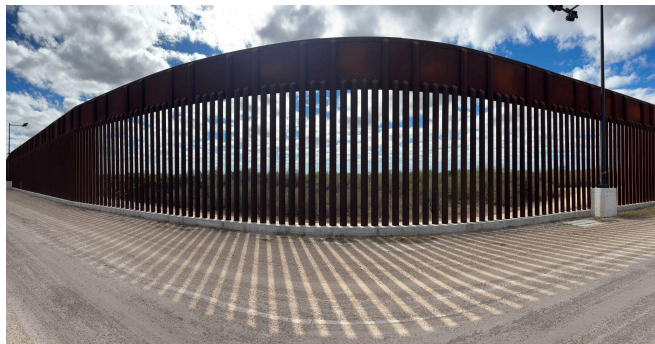
Immigration and the Rio Grande Valley

with Mark Friedman and Meadow Davis

The Rio Grande Valley, where the Rio Grande River marks the border between the United States and Mexico, is a region shaped by both division and connection. This area is a crossroads where languages, cultures, and histories blend, offering a unique perspective on what it means to be a global neighbor.



This travel course takes Athenian students to Hidalgo County, Texas, to experience the vibrant culture of the borderlands and to explore the realities of immigration, community life, and resilience. We are partnering with ARISE Adelante, a respected community organization that supports families living in colonias--unincorporated neighborhoods outside city limits developed on former agricultural land. Colonias are deeply rooted in Mexican culture, with over 96% of residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino. Here, Mexican traditions, language, and values are central to everyday life, shaping everything from community celebrations and religious observances to food, music, and family gatherings. While colonias face challenges such as limited infrastructure and access to services, they are also centers of strong family ties, cultural pride, and ingenuity. The blending of Mexican and American influences has given rise to a distinct Tex-Mex identity, visible in music, cuisine, and local customs.



Through ARISE Adelante's Border Witness Program, students will engage directly with local residents, learning about issues like political asylum, public health, free trade, and environmental sustainability in the Rio Grande Valley. These experiences will be

complemented by opportunities for reflection and discussion, encouraging students to think critically about the complexities of border life and immigration.

Roughly half of each day will focus on understanding the social, economic, and political landscape of the region. The other half will be dedicated to service, working alongside ARISE Adelante to support recent immigrants and colonia residents. Activities will include:

- Hearing testimonials from ARISE staff and participants, learning why they chose to immigrate to the United States;
- Visiting the Border Wall separating the US and Mexico;
- Talking with U.S. Border Patrol staff;
- Visiting an emergency shelter for people that have just arrived in the US;
- Touring La Posada Providencia, a long-term shelter where people can stay for up to 3 months.

Cultural immersion is a key part of the course. Students will explore local markets, attend a mariachi Mass at the Basilica of San Juan, visit the Museum of South Texas History, and experience the natural beauty of the area at Bentsen Rio Grande State Park or Quinta Mazatlan.

No proficiency in Spanish is required, but students will have opportunities to practice the language if they wish. Accommodations will be at the Basilica Hotel in San Juan, Texas. Please note, we will remain within the United States and will not cross the border into Mexico.

We'll spend the first few days of March Term preparing for our journey. Students will have Monday, March 30 as a recovery day at home. Then we'll be on campus on March 31 and April 1 reflecting on and sharing our experience. We plan to visit Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood on one of these days.

This course offers students a unique opportunity to learn from and with the people of the Rio Grande Valley, gaining a deeper understanding of border issues and the rich cultural tapestry of South Texas.

Special Considerations:

Projected Travel Dates: March 15 to 22, 2026

Projected Cost: \$2,700 - \$2,800

- Students in the course will hold a fundraising walk to support ARISE Adelante's work. Students are expected to read one book about immigration in the United States prior to departure.
- For more information, contact Mark at mfriedman@athenian.org.

¡Vamos a Guatemala! Language Immersion and Service

with Kristina Merschat and Elizabeth Jurado

Are you ready to take your Spanish skills beyond the classroom walls and apply them to real-life situations? Are you interested in communicating and connecting with others around the world? Are you a hands-on learner excited to experience a new culture first hand? Are you excited about doing a service project to help local families? ¡Vamos a Guatemala!

This travel course will be an incredible opportunity for students to fully immerse themselves for nine days as we explore language and culture in Guatemala. Our program goals include providing an immersive Spanish experience for students, as well as authentic interactions with and in service of local people. Our partner for this linguistic and cultural adventure is Walking Tree Travel, a Colorado-based educational adventure organization. We will not be taking language classes but instead taking an experiential approach by doing homestays, participating in a five-day service project, and exploring communities such as Antigua and Lake Atitlan. With local guides we will learn about the food, people, traditions, music, art, and history of Guatemala and Mayan culture.

This travel course has a natural connection with our internationalism, adventure, and service pillars and is emblematic of the Athenian model of experiential education.

Some highlights from our itinerary include:

- Homestays with families
- Service project in the host family community
- Latin dance class
- Chocolate making lesson and factory tour
- Talk with weavers and a back strap weaving workshop
- Workshop on local sustainable practices and craftsmanship
- Visit to a medicinal plant garden and talk with Mayan women's cooperative
- Learning about local honey production at a Bee Farm
- Tour and tasting at a Guatemalan coffee farm
- Forest canopy tour
- Overnights in Antigua, San Marcos, Guatemala City, and with host families in a small community on Lake Atitlan



The first few days of March Term before our departure will be spent together on campus preparing for our journey. We can't wait for you to embark on this educational adventure with us for what promises to be a fun, exciting, challenging, and fulfilling language journey in beautiful Guatemala!

Special Considerations:

Projected Travel Dates: March 22 to 31, 2026

Projected Cost: \$5,500 - \$5,700

- This course will be conducted entirely in Spanish. We will be immersed in the language around the clock with host families, local guides, trip leaders, community members, and daily interactions with people on the street. For this reason, priority will be given to students who either have completed or are currently enrolled in Spanish 3 or higher or to students with an equivalent skill level in Spanish.
- For more information, contact Kristina at kmersch@athenian.org.