

**SACRED HEART ACADEMY  
SUMMER READING 2026**

“That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong.” — **F. Scott Fitzgerald**

**FRESHMAN CLASS (Regents)**

- |                           |                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Laurie Halsie Anderson | <i>Speak</i>                    |
| 2. M. T. Anderson         | <i>Feed</i>                     |
| 3. Smith, Betty           | <i>A Tree Grows in Brooklyn</i> |

**FRESHMAN CLASS (Honors)**

- |                           |                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Laurie Halsie Anderson | <i>Speak</i>                    |
| 2. M. T. Anderson         | <i>Feed</i>                     |
| 3. Rand, Ayn              | <i>Anthem</i>                   |
| 4. Smith, Betty           | <i>A Tree Grows in Brooklyn</i> |

**SOPHOMORE CLASS (Regents)**

- |                        |                                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Cisneros, Sandra    | <i>The House on Mango Street</i> |
| 2. Salinger, J. D.     | <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>    |
| 3. Williams, Tennessee | <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>       |

**SOPHOMORE CLASS (Honors)**

- |                        |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Hansberry, Lorraine | <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>    |
| 2. Salinger, J.D.      | <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> |
| 3. Steinbeck, John     | <i>Of Mice and Men</i>        |
| 4. Williams, Tennessee | <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>    |

**JUNIOR CLASS (Regents)**

- |                      |                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Austen, Jane      | <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> |
| 2. Bronte, Charlotte | <i>Jane Eyre</i>           |

**JUNIOR CLASS (Honors) A. P. LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION**

- |                      |                           |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Collins, Wilkie   | <i>The Woman in White</i> |
| 2. DuMaurier, Daphne | <i>Rebecca</i>            |
| 3. Forster, E. M.    | <i>Howards End</i>        |

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## **SENIOR CLASS**

### **Selected Topics in World Literature**

- |                    |                                      |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Picoult, Jodi   | <i>My Sister's Keeper</i>            |
| 2. Stein, Garth    | <i>The Art of Racing in the Rain</i> |
| 3. Walls, Jeanette | <i>The Glass Castle</i>              |

### **Hitchcock Studies**

- |                      |                                   |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. DuMaurier, Daphne | <i>Rebecca</i>                    |
| 2. Matheson, Richard | <i>I Am Legend</i>                |
| 3. Wilde, Oscar      | <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> |

### **A.P. Literature and Composition**

- |                              |                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi | <i>Purple Hibiscus</i> |
| 2. McEwan, Ian               | <i>Atonement</i>       |
| 3. Morrison, Toni            | <i>The Bluest Eye</i>  |

### **Gender Studies / Advanced American Literature: in affiliation with St. John's University**

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Alcott, Louisa May | <i>Little Women</i>  |
| 2. Gissing, George    | <i>The Odd Women</i> |
| 3. Stockett, Kathryn  | <i>The Help</i>      |

#### **Required Films:**

1. Leder, Mimi, director *On the Basis of Sex* (2018 movie)
2. Meyers, Nancy, director *The Intern* (2015 movie)

\*\*\*\*\*Scroll down for Dr. Minogue's Gender Studies summer journal assignment.

## **Gender Studies Summer Journal Assignment 2026**

### **Required Reading:**

1. Alcott, Louisa May *Little Women*
2. Gissing, George *The Odd Women*
3. Stockett, Kathryn *The Help*

### **Required Films:**

1. Leder, Mimi, director *On the Basis of Sex* (2018 movie)
2. Meyers, Nancy, director *The Intern* (2015 movie)

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June, 2026

Dear pioneer of the class of 2027,

Yes, you! Congratulations on your acceptance to Sacred Heart Academy's ground-breaking senior Honors English offering: Gender Studies /Advanced American Literature. As the nineteenth class in Sacred Heart history to be given the opportunity to explore this fascinating field, you will continue in the footsteps of your 1,000+ predecessors from the classes of 2006 through 2026 in breaking new ground in the world of cutting-edge literary studies. I applaud you for your courage and daring!

So that we all may "hit the ground running" in September, I would like you to read the following works over the summer, immersing yourself in the concept of conventional vs. unconventional roles assigned to or assumed by men and women in literature by authors of fiction:

*Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott

*The Odd Women* by George Gissing

*The Help* by Kathryn Stockett

Please, please, please, do not be intimidated by the length of these works. I promise you that once you start reading them, you will not be able to put them down and the pages will fly!

In addition, view the following films, remaining particularly alert to the challenges faced by women, both real (Ruth Bader Ginsburg in *On the Basis of Sex*) and fictional (Jules Ostin in *The Intern*) attempting to negotiate a balance between family and career responsibilities:

Leder, Mimi, director            *On the Basis of Sex* (2018 movie)

Meyers, Nancy, director        *The Intern* (2015 movie)

So as to keep a record of your reflections, I would like you to purchase a notebook and designate it as your "Gender Studies Journal." You will be adding entries to it throughout the school year, so be sure that it contains a sufficient number of pages. You may either hand-write your responses or type them and staple them in your journal – whatever spurs your creativity! **Please be sure to leave a 2-inch margin on the right or left so that I may respond to your offerings with commentary.** I will collect these in September and assess them as part of your first quarter grade, return them to you, and then collect them periodically throughout the year.

**Integrity Clause: It is imperative that you do your own work** and that the reflections you record are the result of personal thought and private contemplation. Do not confer with another Gender Studies student. Do not ask to read her journal nor offer yours for her to read. This is an invasion of academic privacy and an inherent act of dishonesty. There will be ample opportunity to share your thoughts in a proper venue: in class during discussion. Do not consult Spark Notes or any study guide; do not access AI content in any form, including ChatGPT, as all three of these will cloud your unique vision of these works and deprive all of us of the freshness of your response. This Gender Studies course is testament to the power of women to prove to a sometimes skeptical world their intelligence, strength, and integrity. Any instance of dishonesty bespeaks weakness of mind and heart, giving credibility to the misguided notion rampant throughout history and, sadly, still in existence today in far too many parts of the world, that women are incapable of serious intellectual activity and lacking ethical depth. Every facet of this

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course dispels these notions, but dishonesty on the part of any member of our learning community tragically gives authority to it. Dishonest in any and all forms notes a failed response to the most basic tenets of this course and will thus be reflected in a grade of 0.

### **Regarding your journal entries:**

Begin your response to **each** of the **three texts** with the following information: (No need to journal the films – we will discuss them as a group in class)

- title
- author
- genre
- setting (time – year or decade or century – and place – country or state or geographic area)
- very brief description of two or three main characters **via 3-4 adjectives specifically addressing character personality traits**

**and then, move on to your reflections on our central focus this year: empathy:**

**Empathy** is described as the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another. At its core, empathy involves more than simply recognizing emotions – it requires a deep, nuanced capacity to emotionally connect and comprehend another’s inner experience. Empathy is a multifaceted psychological construct that can be understood through three distinct yet interconnected types: **cognitive, emotional, and compassionate empathy:**

**Cognitive empathy** represents the intellectual capacity to understand another person’s perspective and mental state and emotional perspective without necessarily experiencing their feelings directly.

**Emotional empathy** involves a deeper experience of actually feeling what another person feels and experiences. Unlike cognitive empathy, this type creates a profound emotional resonance where an individual experiences similar emotional states as the person he/she is connecting with.

**Compassionate empathy** represents the most comprehensive and actionable form of empathetic engagement. This type not only involves understanding and feeling another’s emotions but also motivates individuals to take concrete actions to support and assist the person experiencing difficulty.

For **each of the three assigned readings**, record your journal responses to the following five questions in informal essay format:

1. Choose one **female character** from the text and comment on the degree and **type** of empathy (cognitive, emotional, or compassionate) she exhibits. Provide a specific example from the text in support of your claim.
  - ✓ Who or what engages her empathy? To whom or what is she empathetic?
  - ✓ Is the degree and type of empathy she exhibits typical or atypical for females?
  - ✓ Does she become more of a stereotypical woman or less so because of the degree and type of empathy she exhibits?
  - ✓ Defend your claims with details from the text.

2. Choose one **female character** from the text who you believe shows NO EMPATHY.
  - ✓ Explain your reason for claiming that she shows no empathy
  - ✓ Defend your claim with details from the text- i.e. a specific example from the text depicting her lack of empathy towards another character
  
3. Choose one **male character** from the text and comment on the degree and **type** of empathy (cognitive, emotional, or compassionate) he exhibits. Provide a specific example from the text in support of your claim.
  - ✓ Who or what engages his empathy? To whom or what is he empathetic?
  - ✓ Is the degree and type of empathy he exhibits typical or atypical for males?
  - ✓ Does he become more of a stereotypical man or less so because of the degree and type of empathy he exhibits?
  - ✓ Defend your claims with details from the text.
  
4. Choose one **male character** from the text who you believe shows NO EMPATHY.
  - ✓ Explain your reason for claiming that he shows no empathy
  - ✓ Defend your claim with details from the text- i.e. a specific example from the text depicting his lack of empathy towards another character

5. If you were any character in the work, discuss **either**:

How, **as the female character**, you would exhibit a greater degree of empathy **compared to the degree of empathy that female character exhibits in the text**

**OR**

How, **as the male character**, you would exhibit a greater degree of empathy **compared to the degree of empathy that male character exhibits in the text.**

In essence, *become* that character.

(i.e. **If I were** Celia Foote, and I were faced with \_\_\_\_\_, I would exhibit a greater degree of empathy by \_\_\_\_\_).

**OR**

(i.e. **If I were** Edmund Widdowson, I would exhibit a greater degree of empathy by \_\_\_\_\_).

- Generally speaking, your responses to Questions #1, #2, #3, and #4 will be lengthier than your response to #5..
- When recalling plot points from the texts, remember to keep to the literary PRESENT tense.
- As a true pioneer, be open to new areas of exploration; have confidence in your intuitive reactions; I am certain that your pursuit will be a character-building and horizon-expanding experience.

Have a wonderful summer. I look forward to continuing our journey together in September.

All the best,

Dr. Minogue