



CURRICULUM GUIDE 2020-2021





Contents

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	2
VISION, MISSION	3
Vision & Mission	3
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY.....	4
ACADEMIC COURSES	5
Applied Mathematics	5
Applied Scientific Research	6
Integrative Art	6
Histories	7
Human Ecology	8
Literature and Writing	8
Marine Ecology.....	9
Leadership Capstone	10
OUTDOOR EXPEDITIONS & PHYSICAL EDUCATION.....	11
DEMONSTRATIONS OF LEARNING.....	13
SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT	14

The Island School Semester

The Island School Semester is an independent academic program in The Bahamas for high school sophomores and juniors. The 14-week course of study includes classes in ecological science, field-based scientific research, history, mathematics, art, and English literature, as well as physical and outdoor education, cultural immersion experiences, and service learning.

Our entire program is place-based and experiential, intentionally immersing students in both the natural and cultural landscape of South Eleuthera. Consequently, all courses have a field component to them. For example, in the applied scientific research course, students conduct primary research for a wide spectrum of investigations, including fisheries, sustainable energy, food production systems, and cultural resources.

Similarly, the thrust of the coursework in the humanities classes stems from the many cultural immersion experiences throughout the semester. In addition to collaboration with Bahamian students at Deep Creek Middle School, Island School students spend considerable time learning from and with members of the local settlements.

Integral to the semester are the physical and outdoor education programs. Not only do students spend five mornings a week training for either a half-marathon or four-mile open-ocean swim, they also participate in three and eight-day sea kayaking expeditions and earn their PADI's Open Water Diver certification. These daily activities and expeditions take place around the 100 acre peninsula on which we live, and along the shores on South Eleuthera, further exploring our central question of "How do we live well in a place?"

Ultimately, the rigorous schedule and programs create a transformative experience for our students, who gain deep understandings of leadership, sustainability, community, and sense of place. The unique educational model intentionally steps away from the traditional high school path to create a complex, thoughtful and wholistic experience for exceptional high school students.

We look forward to sharing our school with you.

Vision & Mission

The Island School's vision is a mantra, not a statement; it is a powerful goal that resonates in the minds of every community member. Guiding both the vision and the mission is one central question.

Central Question

How do we live well in a place?

Vision

Leadership effecting change.

Mission

The Island School serves as a catalyst in the global transition to a more livable future through:

Developing an intimate sense of place in students through immersion experiences in the natural and cultural environment;

Modeling sustainability of individual lifestyles, larger communities, and the systems that support them;

Creating an intentional community whose members are cognizant of their abilities, limitations, and effect on others.

Teaching Philosophy

Teaching students about their environment, in their environment, is fundamental to The Island School experience. Students are asked to think for themselves, provide answers to their own questions, and practice the skills of primary research. They practice these skills in all disciplines, whether in history through ethnographic interviews, in science with ecological field studies, or in Literature & Writing through expository writing employing critical perspectives.

Our teaching and learning is guided by the following principles:

Less is more. We emphasize understanding and applying ideas and skills rather than covering content. By narrowing the focus we can go deeper.

Students are active participants in the learning process. The classroom is a true seminar where everyone shares information. The teacher is a facilitator and guide.

The learning process is accelerated when students are pushed outside of their comfort zones. Challenge begets positive growth.

All disciplines emphasize connection to place. Students must be immersed in the environment and challenged to articulate what they sense.

Academic work has real world application. There is a real job to complete that raises the bar beyond the quest for a final grade.

Assessment is an ongoing process, allowing time for revision and a clear explanation of expectations. The assessment process transcends disciplines and fosters a more in-depth, interdisciplinary learning journey.

There must be time for digestion and reflection.

The teacher is prepared to participate in assignments and provide models and rubrics.

The classroom is an open arena where students feel safe challenging ideas, where there is consistent faculty peer review. The classroom door is always open.

Academic Courses

The academic program at The Island School is intended to challenge students' traditional concepts of how, what, and why they learn while also pushing them to take primary responsibility for their learning journey. Through class discussions, authentic research, and experiential opportunities, students engage in academic class six days per week. Built into the week is time for reflection, extra-help, consultation, and additional study. Evening study hours and occasional night classes provide ample time for student learning and review. Faculty continuously assess the work of our students through written feedback and one-on-one conversations. Students are active participants in assessment as we believe that this feedback and the opportunity for assessment is a continuation of the learning process, rather than a reflection of it.

APPLIED MATHEMATICS

Course Description:

This course covers a basic understanding of statistics and skills with Excel. We pair these topics with a day to day application within our research teams. Students use these data and analysis skills to better understand research topics such as lobster fishery sustainability, coral propagation, and shark population dynamics. Math is paired with research to provide context and real life application to the math skills we study—doing so forms authentic connections between the skills needed to analyze and ultimately hypothesize real scientific discovery.

Additionally, we cover topics including climate change, ocean acidification, Fibonacci's triangle, and renewable energy. Through a lens of economic efficiency, energy output, and testing methodology, we correlate these math concepts. The culminating project/presentation challenges students to delve into theory and application of renewable energy systems.

Objectives:

- Connect to their surrounding world and their immediate environment through quantitative reasoning and analysis
- Understand how statistics enable more informed decision making

Topics and Content:

- Excel: solar insolation routine (basic functions, graphing, data entry, analysis)
- Statistics (regression analysis, measures of central tendency)
- Fibonacci sequence (error calculations)
- Ocean acidification (chemistry and exponentials)
- Renewable energy systems (wind, hydro, tidal, biomass)
- Climate change (layer models of the atmosphere, dimensional analysis)

Assessment:

This course will be assessed through assignments and a final project on design and simulation.

APPLIED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Course Description:

The Applied Scientific Research course provides students with a unique opportunity to join real, ongoing research projects with the intent for publication, led by scientists and engineers at the Cape Eleuthera Institute and Center for Sustainable Development. Students are introduced to the components of the research process by working with staff scientists based on Eleuthera. On a finer scale, students are challenged by synthesizing peer-reviewed scientific literature, developing field skills, interpreting statistical analyses, as well as communicating this research to a public audience. From this course, students can apply their understanding of the research process to a global context.

Objectives:

- Connect students with Eleuthera by joining ongoing research projects at CEIS
- Understand the scientific process
- Develop the skills to critically analyze scientific literature
- Build proficiency in project-specific field skills

Content:

- Project-specific field methodology
- Statistics
- Scientific communication in a virtual world

Assessment:

This course will be assessed through a series of discussions on journal articles and a final research presentation

INTEGRATIVE ART

The art class encourages students to develop a personal relationship with the landscape, provides them with tools to become keen observers of their surroundings, and requires them to view the natural world as both the canvas and materials for their artwork.

We will survey both large scale and less known examples that integrate into the environment and pieces that interrupt the environment. Students will be challenged to tap into their creativity and demonstrate thought in their work - whether their intention is aesthetic, activist or ethereal. Students will capture their work through photographs in the event that we can't physically view it as a group, or present it as part of a class critique. Finally, the possibility of a group or individual legacy project exists and may take on a number of forms or media.

Objectives:

- Students will consider the questions: What is art? What defines a successful piece of work? How does one interpret what they see?
- Students will develop, recognize and inspire creativity

- Students can offer critical and constructive feedback to peers

Content:

- Seeing the world around you
- Mixed media and upcycling
- Presentation and public speaking
- Photography, site visits, video, writing
- Environmental and found object art

HISTORIES

Course Description:

In order to affect change, one must understand oneself and one's relation to others. By examining present-day societies and cultures, students analyze the relationship between environmentalism and social structures. By studying the ways in which societal power structures have been constructed over time, students gain an understanding of the way the actions of the past impact the present and the actions of the present impact the future. In their critical analysis of historiography, students self-reflect on how they create, interpret, and synthesize stories and perspectives. Students explore themes such as worldview, positionality, environmental privilege, racism, and environmental justice. By working collaboratively to build a collective understanding of world problems, students develop an understanding of their role as a stakeholder and as a global citizen.

Objectives:

- Recognize that knowledge of the past helps one understand the present and make decisions about the future
- Understand that a balanced account of history must consider a wide range of perspectives and sources
- Broaden perspectives by understanding that positionality affects the lens through which we see and interpret the world

Content and Topics:

- Historiography
- Perspective, Bias, & Worldview
- Privilege
- Racism
- Environmental Justice

Assessment:

This course will be assessed through a series of Harkness discussions and a final written essay.

HUMAN ECOLOGY

The human ecology class explores how individual and societal choices impact our communities. We focus on micro-levels within our own lives, to macro-levels, looking at global systems. During class time, students are introduced to a number of environmental topics such as food security, environmental justice, personal consumption patterns, and waste management. We discuss the unique challenges and solutions applicable to each topic, which vary depending on physical location, systems available, and choices (or lack thereof) made by people living in specific areas. Individually and in groups, students research and compare sustainable systems, projects, and mindsets they find at home, on the island school campus, and globally to propose solutions to climate change issues.

Objectives:

- Students will be introduced to the lens of human ecology, which acknowledges the interdisciplinary nature of complex world issues.
- Students will develop their critical thinking, collaboration, and group discussion skills by engaging in vigorous thought and debate regarding problems and solutions presented by climate change.

Content Covered:

- What Is The Human Ecology Lens
- Renewable Energy
- Food Security
- Permaculture
- Waste Management
- Personal And Societal Barriers To Change

Assessment:

This Course Will Be Assessed Through Fieldwork, Written Work, And Harkness Discussions.

LITERATURE AND WRITING

Course Description:

Literature and Writing uses a variety of mediums to establish a more profound understanding and lexicon as it relates to climate change. Climate change literacy is crucial for our students to be able to be leaders effecting change. Too often, we use buzzwords like sustainability and climate change without an adequately established basis, thus diluting their significance. We, as a society, lose a lot of agency in combating climate change without a proper understanding of what it is we are addressing. This course builds upon the question: Do I understand what I mean when I say climate change? From here, students are challenged to think critically about the topic from different lenses. We read texts like *A Small Place* by Jamaica Kincaid, examine poetry as a form of activism, do close readings of environmental agreements, and write daily reflections and peer-edit work. This course addresses universal topics, but will always make connections to the place we inhabit. The Bahamas serves as a fantastic backdrop to examine the intersection between greenhouse gases and issues of equity, the importance of indigenous voices and the Paris Agreement, and the power of youth

activism and the importance of language as a means for change.

Objectives:

- Establish a solid understanding of the world of language surrounding climate change
- Hone critical thinking and reading as two of the essential skills needed for comprehension

Content:

- A Small Place by Jamaica Kincaid
- Retroactive analysis of the Paris Agreement
- A collection of articles discussing equity and equality.
- A collection of poems on social activism

Assessment:

This course will be assessed through a central piece of writing and a series of Harkness discussions.

MARINE ECOLOGY

Course Description:

The student journey begins with an introduction to the incredible diversity of marine life surrounding us on Cape Eleuthera and local to you at home. Students are encouraged to develop greater observational skills as they examine the relationships and interactions between species in marine ecosystems while classifying and categorizing living organisms. Our central question of How do we live well in a place? directs the learning process as students build awareness of the interconnectedness of ecosystems and the extent to which a small change can have lasting impacts. Topical issues of climate change, sustainable development and food security are addressed through problem solving challenges that encourage students to develop empathy and understanding of conflicting perspectives and world views. Experiential and interactive lessons will take place in the field with a practical focus and provide the opportunity for students to collaborate with researchers from the Cape Eleuthera Institute.

Objectives:

- Build a deep understanding of the complex relationships/interactions within the different marine ecosystems as well as a student's local ecosystems
- Broaden perspectives and practice empathy for socio-environmental interactions by analyzing scientific evidence, incorporating ecological understanding, and accounting for various stakeholders
- Understand why science and politics don't always align, and demonstrate awareness of challenges/obstacles in conservation

Topics and Content:

- Anatomy, taxonomy and species ID
- Oceanography and climate change
- Ecosystem interactions
- Fisheries management
- Ecosystem service valuation

- Marine conservation

Assessment:

This course will be assessed through a series of discussions on journal articles, a final research presentation and scientific poster production..

LEADERSHIP CAPSTONE

Course Description:

Leadership effecting change is a key component of the student experience. We begin this journey by reflecting on who we are as individuals and build upon this knowledge to understand how we operate as a collective. We spend time trying to better understand ourselves, our motivations, values, and what drives us, so we are better equipped to seek our best self.

We believe leadership to be dynamic, and throughout the semester we aim to challenge and sharpen our existing understanding of what it means to be a leader. We prepare students to engage in a globalizing world by developing empathy, awareness, and communication skills. In Leadership Workshops over the course of the semester, we develop a set of practical and applicable tools for interacting with others in a productive way. At The Island School we believe in the potential for leadership to exist in every situation--both formal and informal--and therefore students can practice and integrate these tools into every aspect of their lives. Students have the freedom to hone these skills and learn from mistakes in a supportive environment. Specifically, they engage in feedback and reflection in order to grow as leaders in the community. Having had the opportunity to practice real leadership, we believe that students are better equipped to effect meaningful change. We aim to create space where students understand that they have the potential to make meaningful change--change that can be all shapes and sizes and that is unique to their own journey.

Objectives:

- Understanding that the potential for leadership exists in every situation and that one can rely on empathy, awareness, and clear communication to effect positive change.
- Practicing leadership in a variety of situations so that students are more prepared to implement these skills upon their return home

Content:

- Throughout the leadership journey, students engage with tools such as; VIA character strengths, NOLS leadership activities, vulnerability exercises, listening practices, mindfulness, creativity, reflection.

Assessment:

- Students are provided feedback on their leadership skills throughout the semester with formal session as the mid-point and the end of the term. While students are not graded on their leadership development, they are assessed based upon a variety of competencies.

Outdoor Expeditions & Physical Education

The outdoor leadership and physical components of The Island School are designed to challenge students to push themselves through difficulty and gain new found confidence. Students learn to persevere and move outside of their comfort zones, support one another when the going gets tough, and celebrate accomplishments as individuals and as a community.

EXPEDITIONS

Sea kayaking expeditions are a key facet of our place-based education model, during which students interact with the coastal environment of South Eleuthera. Expeditions provide students the platform to learn essential hard skills involved in sea kayaking and leave no trace camping while building the soft skills associated with leadership. Students take turns leading their pod through the day's route, selecting and setting up a campsite, cooking meals collaboratively, and learning about themselves and each other through various activities.

SOLO EXPERIENCE

Students participate in a 48-hour solo experience. Our solo experiences are not designed to be survival tests, they are, however, a time for students to engage in reflection and spend time alone with their thoughts. The ability to reflect on our thoughts and critically analyze our actions and decisions are fundamental aspects of experiential education. While each student will have a unique solo experience, all students undergo this journey, ultimately strengthening community bonds.

MORNING EXERCISE

The morning exercise program is a rigorous physical education experience. The entire community—students and faculty alike—spends at least one hour participating in a variety of workouts five days of the week. Most exercises include a combination of swimming, running, and calisthenics; other offerings center on team sports such as water polo, volleyball, or ultimate Frisbee, while yoga and freediving opportunities develop mental fortitude and wellness. In addition, our regular morning exercise takes place across Cape Eleuthera where we live, and serves as an added way to connect with and explore our environment.

By the third week of the semester, students decide on a specialized course of training in preparation for one of two pinnacle challenges: a half-marathon or four-mile “super swim.” Three workouts per week are dedicated to this effort, with one day set aside as a long exercise. Other notable workouts include a series of timed “run-swims” which allows students to track their personal progress throughout the semester. Regardless of the exercise, the focus of physical education at The Island School is self challenge and individual improvement.

SCUBA

The SCUBA program is instrumental to the Island School journey because it provides students with an opportunity to explore the beautiful underwater environment that surrounds Eleuthera. Treated the same as any class, students must complete book work and demonstrate proficiency in a number of underwater skills. The SCUBA program supports our marine ecology curriculum, where students use SCUBA as a tool to access and better understand our marine environment. By the end of the semester, most students acquire PADI's Open Water Diver certification and log upward of five dives, including a night dive.



Demonstration of Learning

The Demonstration of Learning is a forum, administered twice a semester, at which students are challenged to discuss and show what they have gained through their experience. This can focus on academic achievements, personal growth, specific learning opportunities, or challenges overcome and obstacles navigated. In preparation for their Demonstration of Learning, students are asked to pause, reflect and thoughtfully consider what, why, and how they have made steps toward growth. As a central tenet of our leadership curriculum, this process helps students to look inward and consider relationships with others, who they are, and who they want to be.

In their Demonstration of Learning, students speak to experiences they have had over the course of their journey—what was most significant to them, themes that have occurred, and how that knowledge connects with the student's life; at The Island School, at school, at home, and in the world at large. The presentations from our students are as varied and multidimensional as the students themselves.

Though given broad questions to guide them, the onus is on the students to reflect on their journey and decide what stands out. This is an opportunity for students to bring their work portfolio to life. Presentations can entail a focus on self and personal growth, energy systems and sustainability, leadership, historical realizations, or creativity; the possibilities are endless.

The Demonstration of Learning is an opportunity for students to appreciate the intrinsic worth of learning. This is intended to be a capstone experience for everyone—discussants and presenters alike.



Official Course Transcript

Student Name _____

Sending School: Advisor: Semester:

Course Title	Discipline	Grade
Applied Mathematics	Mathematics (Honors)	
Applied Scientific Research	Science (Honors)	
Integrative Art	Art	
Histories	History (Honors)	
Human Ecology	Social Science (Honors)	
Literature & Writing	English Literature (Honors)	
Leadership Capstone	Capstone (Honors)	
Marine Ecology	Science (Honors)	
Physical Education	Physical Education	

The Island School Semester is an independent one-semester experiential education program for high school sophomores and juniors.

