

## The Great Books Program

The Academic Institute, Inc is offering a year long (two semesters) course titled Great Books. This course is designed for the student needing a humanities elective, who is preparing for college, and wants exposure to the world's best reading.

A college or university is a place where the great works of the past are studied. The beginning college student who is grounded in the humanities and enjoys reading has an important advantage. One of the best preparations for higher education is immersion in the great works of literature. The reader of these works becomes familiar with the highlights of history and culture, attunes the ear to the sounds and rhythms of poetry and good writing, and acquires the confidence to tackle ever greater challenges. The reading of the great books is an aid to learning the art of clear and precise writing (an essential skill in any college curriculum).

In addition to being good for college prep, the great books curriculum can help a student who has difficulty reading or who is uninterested in reading. Because the great books become more interesting the slower they are read, they can profitably be read with care and attention to detail. The great books require the student to focus on details, a reading habit which is one of the first steps in learning to love reading. For instance, the basic plot of the Iliad by Homer is relatively simple and can be quickly reviewed in summary form. But the careful reader of the Iliad, reading slowly, notices a million tiny details, each of which is fascinating both in itself and as part of the whole. The Iliad, as do most or all of the great books, contains within itself a universe. Once a student learns to read with care, noting details and taking pleasure in aesthetics, confidence improves and matters such as interpretation and the discovery of different levels of meaning follow.

For the first semester we will read:

Homer's Iliad (selections)  
Milton's Paradise Lost (selections)  
The Old Testament of The Bible (selections)

For the second semester we will read:

Plato's Apology  
Dante's Inferno (selections)  
Shakespeare's Hamlet (selections)

The great books curriculum includes some incidental poetry to be read along with the great books listed above. We read works by Edgar Allen Poe (The Raven, Annabell Lee), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Kubla Khan), Lord Byron (selected cantos from Don Juan), Sylvia Plath (Daddy) and others.

All works are available at bookstores (specific translations of a few are required) and most are available for free on the internet.