

**Brookline High School English Department**  
**New Course Proposals for 2025-2026**  
~ DRAFT~

From Peter Sedlak

11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Friendship in Literature and Film**

Coming out of a once-in-a-generation global pandemic, many people appear more attuned than ever to the importance of friendship. This course will explore the pleasures, struggles, and complexities of friendship through a study of short stories, novels, and films that all consider the meaning of friendship and other important connections. In this course, we'll look at characters and the various ways they connect or seek out non-romantic connections. What does it mean to call someone a friend? How are friendships different from other types of relationships? What makes certain friendships last a lifetime and others fall apart? Why is the pain of losing a friend often less acknowledged than the pain of losing a partner or a family member? How are male friends different from female friends? How do race, gender, and ability impact friendships? Friendship, after all, is a capacious category; friendships can be platonic, they can be familial, they can become romantic (or walk a fine line), they can become clique-ish, they can exist in nature and extend across species, they can be intimate or professional, and, of course, they can become fraught. Besties can become rivals. Competitors can become frenemies. Sometimes friendships need to cool down, and, in some cases, a positive intensity can transform into enmity. Students will study texts such as Toni Morrison's *Sula*, Claire Keegan's *Foster*, Yasmina Reza's *Art*, and some classics like *Hamlet* and *Gilgamesh*. We will also view films like *Moonlight*, *Didi*, and *Crip Camp*, as well as read several short stories and poems.

From Rob Primmer

12<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Justice in Action: Unpacking Crime, Law, and Consequence**

(with Social Studies)

In this full year interdisciplinary course, students would earn 2 credits (one for English and one for Social Studies). This elective focuses specifically on the criminal justice system and would replace the current Legal Studies course. Students will learn the difference between civil and criminal law and the full criminal justice procedure including what happens post trial and sentencing. Students will do a deep dive into two major case studies: The case of OJ Simpson and the case of Charles Stuart, both highlighting and delving deeper into the issues in criminal procedure. At the same time, students will read books and watch films closely related to these same issues. During the third quarter, students will complete 4 observation hours a week to replace three days of class. During the other class periods, we will move our Citizens Police Academy to "in school hours" using the time to discuss current issues in policing including de-escalation, mental health, less lethal weapons, drugs, and domestic sex trafficking. Students will complete a final project in both English and Social Studies using the knowledge to create a major mock trial packet and a screenplay or final paper. The course is divided into two sections and taught by an English teacher and a Social Studies teacher in separate blocks which will sometimes meet together.