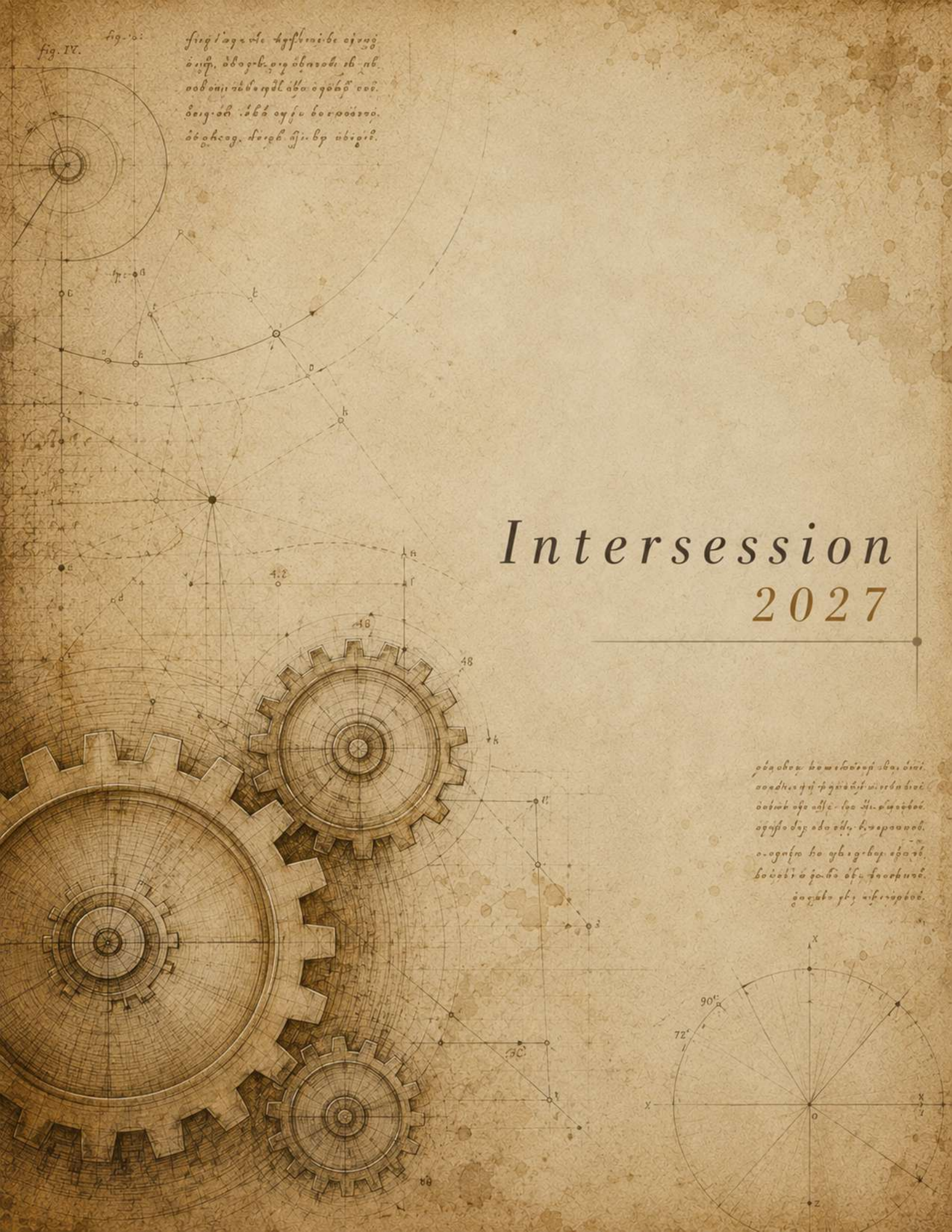


# Intersession
## 2027

Dear IMSA Students,

**Welcome to Intersession 2027!**

Intersession is a chance to **discover** new topics and disciplines, to **explore** familiar concepts in new ways, and to **engage** in experiential learning.

**All courses in this catalog are ONLY for "Intersession II" - the onsite Intersession that runs between Monday, January 4-Friday, January 8, 2027. The other three Intersessions are for Travel Study programs only, and they have no onsite options.**

Intersession offerings are divided into "Core" and "Explore" courses.

**Core** courses are structured; they take a deep dive into a field of inquiry; and they have learning outcomes that are subject to a simple evaluation (pass/fail).

**Explore** courses are free-flowing, fun, and out-of-the-box; they are not necessarily connected to an academic subject area; and they are not subject to evaluation.

You can **build your own Intersession** by selecting either one full-day Core course, OR one morning Core course plus an Explore course. This catalog contains the details of **nearly 40 course offerings**!

We are excited to welcome you to Campus for a week of exciting and experimental learning!

With best wishes,

**The Intersession 2027 Committee**
Michael Dean
Dr. Peter Dong
Dr. Janice Krouse
Bill McGrail
Dr. Eric Rettberg

Dr. Luke Berryman, Director of Experiential Learning
Dr. Paul Gaszak, Dean of Academics & Equity

**Participation in Intersession is a mandatory graduation requirement. All students not involved in an IMSA authorized Travel Study program must be on-campus and engaged in Intersession II (Jan. 4-8) from 9:00am until 4:00pm daily.**

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# COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

## CORE COURSES (All Day, 9:00am-4:00pm)

*Humanities & The Performing Arts*

### Chicago–Crossroads of Cultures and Calories

Instructors: Dr. Patrick Buck and Dr. Shawn Bailey

From its rise as an epicenter of indigenous trade to its role as a global hub of migration and commerce, Chicago has long been a city shaped by human movement. This Intersession course explores the resonant history of Chicago as a crossroads of cultures, tracing the experiences of some of the diverse immigrants who built the city's neighborhoods and its blue-collar reputation as the "city that works," while grappling with consequences of uneasy cohabitation and segregation. Beyond academic work, IMSA students will engage Chicago hands-on through multiple field trips—walking celebrated streets, visiting historical sites and museums, and sampling the flavors of the Windy City with lunches at ethnic restaurants. Potential topics and trips might include the Chicago History Museum, Chinatown, Bronzeville, and/or Ukrainian Village. By blending modern social, environmental, and urban history, this course offers IMSA students a lively introduction to Chicago's past as an evolving crossroads of America.

*Notes*: Students will need to be able to pay for their own lunches and be prepared to walk in the museums and on the streets.

*Course fee*: **$60 per student**, to cover museum admission, transportation, etc. The program fee **does not** include food or drink in Chicago.

### From Earth to Easel: A History of Watercolor

Instructor: Kora Bongen (IMSA Alum)

Many painters are inspired by nature's beauty, but few understand where their colors come from. How did the modern world come to have such a wide range of inexpensive colors? We'll travel through time, look at the various innovations in color manufacturing and see how those innovations influenced art through the ages. We'll also look at artists' contributions to science through improving our understanding of perception, perspective and human anatomy as well as nature art and botanical illustrations. This course combines introductory watercolor techniques with a meditation on how art and science have been intertwined throughout history. Students will work on a painting each day inspired by a particular era, and come away with a better

appreciation for the physical materiality of color and a better understanding of the color choices available to artists today. No prior art experience needed.

Course fee: approximately **$100 per student**

**Let's Make A Movie!**

Instructor: Bill McGrail

Participants will embark on a week-long learning experience that will teach storytelling through the concepts of media production. Participants will gain hands-on experience with script writing, location scouting, filming/production, sound effects and soundtrack creation, postproduction editing and more. The experience will culminate in the creation of either a trailer, short film, documentary or music video. Participants will help decide the path we take towards our final project; either a single collaborative work created by various smaller teams or smaller teams creating unique individual works.

**M + A = F squared**

Instructors: Joyce Symoniak and Mary Beth McCarthy

Students will have the opportunity to create a Fine Arts (Visual Arts or Music) Portfolio or Journal. They will learn to construct the physical binder of the materials as well as will develop a personal plan for the contents. On-going stress relief and fun is found within the creative process of drawing, painting, playing, performing and composing music, as well as through stream of consciousness thoughts, exploration and experimentation. In addition, if fully developed, the Visual Arts or Music portfolios can be used to demonstrate Arts proficiency, during the College Admissions process.

**Read The *Odyssey***

Instructor: Dr. Eric Rettberg

You've seen the Christopher Nolan film or read select passages in an English class, but have you read Homer's *Odyssey* in its entirety? This full-day intersession will give you time and space to read the poem and to think about some of the complexities of how an oral composition more than 2700 years old continues to resonate with audiences to the extent that it can become a cinematic blockbuster. Students will be expected to read a small portion of the beginning of Emily Wilson's

excellent translation over winter break, but they'll have lots of time to read (individually or orally in groups) during the week, which will be punctuated by a series of short contextual lessons exploring Ancient Greek culture, the epic as genre, values and mythology, oral poetics, the nature of Homer's authorship, translation, adaptation, and influence.

*Course fee*: on your own, purchase a copy of Emily Wilson's Odyssey translation (Norton), for **about $20–30**

*Math & Sciences*

**Biomedical Signals Processing: A MATLAB based AI-approach**

Instructor: Dr. Ashwin Mohan

Advances in wearable technology and machine learning are transforming modern healthcare by enabling continuous monitoring of human activity and vital signs. In this intersession, students will explore how biomedical signals—especially signals such as electrocardiogram (ECG), electroencephalogram (EEG), electromyography (EMG) can be captured non-invasively and used for diagnosis and as indicators of overall health.The extracted features are then fed into classification models or used directly for diagnosis. Students will use MATLAB to learn how raw physiological data is cleaned, preprocessed, and transformed into meaningful features. They will apply machine learning techniques, including Support Vector Machines (SVM) and Naïve Bayes, to classify ECG signals. The session also introduces Principal Component Analysis (PCA) for feature selection and uses confusion matrices to evaluate model performance. By comparing different models, students will gain insight into how accuracy can be improved using advanced methods such as ensemble learning. This course is ideal for students interested in computational methods in lifesciences, biomedical engineering, medicine, or healthcare innovation.

*Notes*: Computer Science Inquiry must be completed, and students must have a demonstrated interest in at least one of the following fields: Biology, Biophysics, Cardiology, Medicine, Neuroscience, or Psychology.

**The Pulsar Search Collaboratory: An Introduction to Astronomy Research**

Instructor: Matthew McCutcheon

Have you ever wondered how research in astronomy is conducted? Is it possible for high school students to participate in astronomical research? This Intersession will provide an introduction to a range of fascinating astronomical topics, including exoplanets, pulsars, and the process of stellar evolution. We will also explore key methods used in astronomical research, offering students a glimpse into how discoveries are made in these fields. After this introductory overview, students will have the opportunity to engage with the Pulsar Search Collaboratory, analyzing previously unexamined data in our own search for pulsars. No prior knowledge is required, and students are not obligated to pursue further research in this area. However, for 25 those interested, this Intersession could serve as a valuable introduction to the world of astronomy and research.

*Business, Entrepreneurship, & Life Skills*

**Stress Management for Life**

Instructors: David Lundgren and Mary Myers

If you happen to ever get stressed and need some ideas to help reduce that feeling, this course is for you. You will be introduced to a multitude of different stress reducing activities, ranging from sewing, coloring, origami, pilates, yoga, games, to group fitness. We hope to end with some sweet treats - because, after all, “stressed” spelled backwards is “desserts”!

*Notes*: Active wear is required, similar to the Wellness Course.

*Course fee*: **$10 per student**

*Gaming. Workshopping, & Other Activities*

**Dungeons And Dragons**

Instructors: Steve Dutcher and Dr. Eric Hawker

In this intersession students will be able to learn how to play Dungeons & Dragons (D&D), will write a short adventure, and will play D&D. Students will learn how to create and run a D&D adventure which in essence is an interactive story. Students will also learn how to roleplay scenarios, will learn how to collaborate and think critically about problems.

*Course fee*: **$10 per student**

## CORE COURSES (Morning Only, 9:00am-12:30pm)

*Humanities & The Performing Arts*

### Bookbinding: History and Practice

Instructors: Dr. Ashley Ott and Mike Dean

Come to the crafting table and build your own books, from backings to bindings! Books hold a unique position in both modern and ancient societies. They represent a fundamental leap forward in the storage and development of knowledge. And the art of crafting these objects has evolved through the ages. This course is designed to teach you a bit about that impressive legacy and to offer you an opportunity to craft your own book in a variety of formats: a self-published zine, artistic journal, or restoration project. Students should be prepared to work with paper, parchment, scissors, glues, and crafting tools.

*Course fee*: **$20 per student**

### Chinese Artistry Calligraphy, Painting, & Paper Cutting Mastery

Instructors: Sophie Wang and Christine Zhang

This course will explore the rich artistic traditions that have shaped Chinese culture for centuries. This immersive experience delves into three key art forms: calligraphy, painting, and paper cutting, providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of their history, techniques, and cultural significance. Participants will embark on a creative journey that will introduce them to the graceful strokes of Chinese calligraphy, where they'll learn to wield the brush with precision and appreciate the elegance of characters. In the painting segment, attendees will unlock their inner artists as they discover the secrets behind traditional Chinese landscape and floral paintings, incorporating techniques like ink wash and color blending. Furthermore, the course will delve into the intricate art of paper cutting, showcasing the delicate craftsmanship and symbolism behind this ancient folk art. By the end of the session, participants will have honed their skills and gained a profound appreciation for Chinese artistry, leaving them with their own beautiful creations and a deeper cultural understanding of China's artistic heritage. This session promises to be a transformative and enlightening experience for all who attend.

*Course fee*: **$20 per student**

**Demogorgons, Suburbs, and Superpowers: History and Philosophy of *Stranger Things***

Instructors: Dr. Eric Smith and Tracy Townsend

Students must participate in daily discussions, complete short readings, prepare notes, and otherwise demonstrate through their in- and out-of-class work a developing understanding of the material and a willingness to engage in it. Students will be able to draw parallels between specific historical events and their analogous portrayals in the *Stranger Things* and investigate the conflicts that give rise to the plot and the values those conflicts embody in terms of philosophical movements and principles. Students will engage in a discussion of presented materials brought in by the instructor (historical documents, secondary source accounts, critical analysis of the episodes in light of various academic concerns), as well as discussion of short readings assigned for the prior evening (should not exceed 6-7 pages total per evening). Students will engage in small group discussions, mini-presentations, and a review of a variety of media in their effort to see more clearly how *Stranger Things* echoes, and draws freely from, an array of historical, philosophical, and aesthetic sources.

**LitRPG: Dungeon Crawl IMSA**

New achievement! You've been invited to join our crawl through Matt Dinniman's uber-popular *Dungeon Crawler Carl* as we explore the conventions of LitRPGs, science fiction and fantasy novels in which characters progress through a game-like world through leveling and skill-raising. Familiarity with role-playing video games and their mechanics is helpful but not required. Crawlers will use their developing knowledge of the genre to collaborate on their own IMSA-inspired LitRPG short stories. *Reward*: You want a reward, crawler? Mongo is appalled! This Intersession is its own reward!!

*Notes*: Loan copies of *DCC* will be available upon request from Dr. Hancock.

**Music Composition**

Instructor: Dr. Peter Dong

Budding composers will explore the craft of composition by writing their own pieces. Instruction in the class will emphasize the use of music theory to implement musical ideas, drawing on examples from a variety of genres, with particular emphasis on the interplay of harmony and counterpoint. Students will experience the entire compositional process, from initial sketches to performance, and will record their compositions. Compositions can be written in any musical style and for any instrumentation.

*Notes*: Students must be familiar with at least one instrument (including voice) and be able to read music.

**Musical Performance: Classical to Broadway!**

Instructors: Mary Beth McCarthy and Janice Krouse

Instrumentalists and Vocalists needed! Participants will develop and polish performance skills through practice, dialogue and individualized coaching sessions. Tips for professional performance techniques will be discussed. Students will have solo/ensemble opportunities in a variety of musical genres. The final goal will be a featured performance at the IMSA Expo. If you are currently enrolled in a music course, this could also serve as an opportunity to prepare music for the IHSA Solo/Ensemble Contest and/or future concerts.

*Notes*: Students must have experience playing an instrument or singing. They must perform at an intermediate level and bring at least one piece that they would like to work on. Additional music will be provided.

*Math & Sciences*

**JHMC Contest Workshop**

Instructor: Dr. Micah Fogel

We will survey the problems that have been written, and select and edit problems to make up the 2027 Junior High School Math Contest. Open to anyone interested in learning how to put together a math contest!

**Groupoids and Bundles**

Instructor: Dheeran Wiggins, IMSA Alum

Groupoids are prevalent mathematical structures that encode the symmetries of a system of objects in a coherent fashion. Notably, they generalize the notion of a group, an algebraic structure that encodes the symmetries of a single object. After introducing some rudimentary categorical and topological notions, we will investigate the quintessential example: the fundamental groupoid of a space. We will then state and prove Ronald Brown's Seifert-van Kampen theorem for fundamental groupoids. Bundles, too, are powerful mathematical tools that connect algebraic structures to symmetries and spaces. Of physical importance are the so-called principal bundles, which give rise to 2D finite gauge theory, a sort of (topological) quantum field theory. As it turns out, the set of (isomorphism classes of) principal bundles has the structure of a groupoid. We will thus use our discussion of the fundamental groupoid and Brown-Seifert-van Kampen to guide us through some of this quantum theory.

*Notes*: Students should have taken a proof-based mathematics course, such as linear algebra, abstract algebra, or real analysis.

**What's Science Like Outside the General Senses?**

Instructor: Lassandra Walker

The scope of the session is to provide learners with an overview of how our general senses shape the realms of the world we live in. Through perception and a keen sense of awareness we cope and maintain vital life functions. Our actions precede us. Does sight come before hearing or does touch come before smell?

*Notes*: Students must have completed Biology and Human Anatomy & Physiology I

*Gaming. Workshopping, & Other Activities*

**FRC Robotics**

Instructor: Grant Bell
The FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) is an annual international competition where IMSA partners with mentors to design, build, and program a robot for the competition. Intersession week is an ideal time to design and begin building the robot. In the intersession, students will strategically analyze the competition to distill optimal design concepts. Utilizing these concepts, they will collaboratively design, draft, and prototype multiple robots and components in the search for an optimal design.

*Notes*: Students must already be on the Titan Robotics team.

*Business, Entrepreneurship, & Life Skills*

**Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?**

Instructor: John Wood
*Mr. Wood is an entrepreneur with a BS in Marketing from Miami University Ohio. He's been running his own marketing agency for 35 plus years, and he's been investing for nearly 50 years - having bought his first investment at the age of 18.*

Young people today have a great asset on their side: time. That is the most valuable thing anyone could ever own. Over an extended period of time, one can make for a comfortable life if they start young making financial decisions on the basics of saving, investing, compounding, stocks, bonds, retirement accounts, credit, mortgage, and much more. This course will include actual examples and applications of these conceptual areas. There will also be a presentation by Charles Schwab and Wintrust bank, and representatives will give presentations in their areas of expertise. Finally, students will be given some investment and credit information and be challenged to present back their plan on how they would manage the situations.

## EXPLORE COURSES (1:30pm-4:00pm)

*Humanities & The Performing Arts*

### Alchymia and Chaos: A History of Chemistry

Instructors: Dr. Eric Smith and Dr. Joseph Golab

Alchymia and Chaos will explain why chemists finally gave up their obsession with turning lead into gold and began to put their mathematics to better use. Through labs and historical evidence, this course will combine science with the context that gave rise to the field of chemistry and led to the industrial revolution. Students must have already completed SI Physics and SI Chem.

### The Art of Quilling: From Designs to Masterpieces

Instructor: Kavithaa Suresh Kumar

Step into the colorful world of paper quilling. In this hands-on session, you'll learn how to transform simple strips of paper into stunning works of art. Starting with basic coils and shapes, you'll build your way toward intricate patterns, floral designs, and even 3D creations. Each day introduces new techniques and projects, from greeting cards to decorative pieces, giving you the chance to explore both precision and creativity. By the end of the session, you'll have a collection of your own unique quilled artworks and the skills to continue this relaxing, beautiful craft on your own.

*Course fee*: **$30 per student**

### Get Your Sheet Together: Creative Bullet Journaling for Teens

Instructor: Diane Martin

This five-day course is a relaxed, creative space where students can try out bullet journaling and see what works for them. Each day (two hours), we will experiment with different page ideas like weekly layouts, trackers, and simple planning spreads, using sample journals as inspiration. We'll also spend time practicing basic hand-lettering techniques to make pages more personal and fun, with plenty of room to keep it simple or get more detailed. Along the way, students will explore how a journal can help keep track of school assignments, activities, and short-term goals without feeling overwhelming. The focus is on trying new ideas, building a system that feels

useful, and developing a style that fits each person. By the end of the week, students will have started a journal and gained strategies they can continue using in a way that works for them.

*Course fee*: **$10 per student**

### How to Disagree

Instructor: Dr. Peter Dong

The willingness to disagree with prevailing wisdom is both a right and responsibility of citizens of a democracy. Unfortunately, such disagreement is not always expressed constructively, especially when good role models are lacking. Many people simply say nothing, and the cesspool of social media often guarantees that those who do say something do so in the least helpful way. Western society has created the structure of debate to allow people to disagree in a way that is reasoned, respectful, and thoughtful - a far cry from the spectacle of presidential "debates". The greatest value of debate is to understand why you believe something to be right. In this class, students will learn to use the structure of debate to express and discuss unpopular opinions about even the most controversial topics - abortion, race, religion, politics, IMSA's classes - with courage and passion, but without vitriol, hate, or cancellation.

### Independent Reading

Instructor: Dr. Adam Kotlarczyk and Joseph Marshall

Want to read more but there's never enough time? Now there is. Bring your own reading materials - fiction, nonfiction, history, poetry, graphic novels, almost anything - and spend a few hours each day reading. The only limitation is that your reading cannot be in preparation for a class or test. Research shows that independent reading – defined as "self-selected reading of a continuous text for a wide range of personal and social purposes" – enhances your reading comprehension ability, development of vocabulary, general knowledge, and empathy for others.

*Notes*: Students must bring their own books. Screen reading is not permitted except in special circumstances.

*Math & Sciences*

**A Casual Tour of Number Theory**

Instructor: PK Parekh, IMSA Alum

This session takes a leisurely approach to illustrating key concepts in number theory through practice problems. We will explore modular arithmetic, primes, divisibility rules, and how to break down challenging problems into smaller pieces that are easier to solve. While we may do some proofs together as a class or based on individual interest, the focus will be on developing intuition, honing reasoning skills, and appreciating the beauty of mathematics.

**Electronics: Transient & Periodic Circuit Creation & Testing**

Instructor: Dr. Mark Carlson

Students will use basic electronic components, such as transistors, diodes, and relays, to assemble standard electronic circuits as well as ones of their own design. Evaluation will involve the use of test equipment including oscilloscopes and signal generators. Simulation tools will also be employed. There is no formal prerequisite but prior experience with electronics (DC circuits) will allow the student to advance further.

**Juggling & Mathematics**

Instructor: Dan Campbell

Learn to juggle, and explore the mathematics behind it. During this class you'll learn to juggle the 3-ball cascade, and attempt to learn many other patterns. You'll learn how juggling patterns are represented mathematically as sequences referred to as site swaps. You'll discover mathematical properties to determine which patterns can be juggled, and learn to design your own patterns.

*Course fee*: **$5 per student**

**Sustainability at IMSA**

Instructor: Angie Ahrendt

Come explore how we can make IMSA more sustainable! In this session we will brainstorm ways to make IMSA more sustainable and come up with a plan to implement our ideas. Do you think we can reduce food waste? Increase recycling? Bring your ideas and we will spend the week coming up with a plan or two that will be presented to management.

*Gaming. Workshopping, & Other Activities*

**Aerial Fitness & Yoga**

Instructor: Marta Kaluza

Join Profe Kaluza for aerial fitness and yoga classes that take your workout off the ground and let you defy gravity. Using a hammock suspended from the ceiling, you'll build strength, improve balance, and even get in a bit of cardio. It might seem intimidating at first, but it's beginner-friendly, fun, and leaves you feeling strong, refreshed, and just a little bit magical.

*Course fee*: approximately **$35 per student**

**Indoor Rock Climbing**

Instructor: Grant Bell

Reach new heights in the Indoor Rock Climbing Intersession! This one week course will include one day of on-campus information and training to become familiar with some basics of climbing, and three days of climbing at Vertical Endeavors in Glendale Heights. We will receive additional training at VE and be able to explore all their climbing walls and bouldering problems. No climbing experience is needed! Make sure to dress in comfortable athletic clothing you don't mind getting chalk on. If you already own climbing equipment (harness, shoes, chalk bag, etc.) you are welcome to bring and use them.

Course fee: approximately **$120** per student

**Knot Again!**

Instructor: Susan Kemph. *Ms. Kemph is an Alumni IMSA Parent. She has been sewing, knitting, and practicing other fiber arts for over 40 years.*

Learn the basics of sewing on a sewing machine by completing a quilted pillow. Students will learn sewing terms, how to thread a sewing machine, basic piecing and quilting, how to read patterns, and how to sew in a zipper.

**Knots for Warmth and Enjoyment**

Instructor: Lingyi Meng

This course will teach you how to crochet. Have you ever thought about "making things", but haven't found a good time to actually "get started"? Or are you already a DIY lover, but haven't been able to explore knitting or crochet? If so, this course is perfect for you. We will learn about basic crochet techniques, and then make a few items such as scarves, hats, and even stuffed animals and sweaters.

*Notes*: Students must bring their own yarn and crochet hook every day of the course.

**Let's Play Some Board Games**

Instructor: Terry Leung

Board games are fun to play. There are different genres. Under each genre, there are many games to choose from. In this course, we will explore a few of these categories and have fun playing those games.

**Let's Watch Some Nature Documentaries**

*Instructors: Dr. Jessica Amacher and Sarah O'Leary Driscoll*

Do you love nature? Do you wish you had time to relax and learn more about wild and weird animals, or endangered ecosystems? Do you love the smell of a new box of crayons? Come and watch nature documentaries with us while getting in touch with your artistic side! We will pair our viewing with nature- themed coloring activities for a relaxing and educational exploration.

*Course fee*: approximately **$10 per student**

**Puzzles & Podcasts**

Instructors: Desirae Klimek and Sam White

Join Ms. Klimek and Mrs. White for a relaxing intersession putting together puzzles of your choosing from the Klimek and White collection and listening to insightful and uplifting podcasts

geared toward mental well being. Puzzle independently or with friends and chat about your takeaways and the positive actions the podcasts inspire.

**The Art and Probability of Mahjong**

Instructor: Dr. Brian Trainor

Mahjong is a traditional set collecting tile game that was developed in China. It is still wildly popular today as it involves a nice blend of skill and luck (probability). In this course we will start with the basics of playing Mahjong and progress to advanced scoring and regional game variations. We will focus on developing playing skills and how you can use probability to improve your game. All levels of experience are welcome!

**Trick Taking Card Games**

Instructor: Evan Brummet

We will play Euchre, Spades, Oh Hell and possibly Whist. All games are trick taking which include counting cards and calculating probabilities. They will require strategical and logical thinking. Students will be active in learning and playing games. We will discuss and employ strategies specific to these games but are common to any trick taking game.

**Wiffle Ball: Backyard Baseball and Games**

Instructor: Paul Rummelhoff

Step into a relaxed, student-driven wiffle ball competition that captures the spirit of backyard baseball. Participants will form teams, learn pitching and batting techniques, and compete in daily games and mini-tournaments. The session emphasizes creativity, inclusivity, and fun over formal competition - no prior experience required. Students will have opportunities to experiment with different game formats, invent rules, and try out unique challenges like home run derbies. Each day will include skill-building, gameplay, and time for other backyard games.