



MOUNT VERNON HIGH SCHOOL

2025-2026

J-TERM COURSE GUIDE

Digging into Finance **Internships** **Farm to Table**
Europe Trip **Marine Biology Trip**
J-Term 2026 **Latino Experience**
Plants, Poisons & Puzzles **Digital Content Creation**
Exercise Science/Science of Sport **Creative Collaboration: Art & Poetry**
Freshman Experience **Hit Like & Subscribe**
Theatre after High School

Promoting Excellence in Academics, Arts, and Athletics
Fostering Growth and Confidence as Learners and People

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INTRODUCTION

The staff at Mount Vernon High School has developed this Course Guide to provide information about the courses offered during J-Term. This guide will help students and their parents / guardians become better acquainted with the content of specific courses and will aid students in the course selection process.

NOTE: Students must successfully participate every academic school year in J-Term. Students missing days for illness, personal reasons, etc., are still expected to participate in J-Term. Successful participation will be left to the discretion of instructors and MVHS administration. Credit will be assigned based on the mastery of essential learnings in the J-Term course and determined by the instructors.

A J-Term course is equivalent to all of the courses offered during a traditional semester. Missing one day for illness or personal reasons during J-Term is equivalent to missing seven class periods during a semester long course. We value your attendance during J-Term.

COURSES

- **FRESHMAN EXPERIENCE – .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

REQUIRED IN GRADE 9

Mr. Pedersen, Mrs. Hamm, Mr. Miller, Mr. Timm, Ms. Walls, Ms. Wauford, Mr. Weber, Mrs. Wilkinson, Mr. Wilkinson

The Freshman Experience is designed to be an intensive study to help students become self-aware, build confidence, and prepare for life as a high school student. Students will take a deeper dive into some important health topics covered in their Health 1 Course. The freshman will also gain an understanding of the 4 Foundations of Mustang Nation: 1- Just Be Here, Get Involved, 2- Excellence in the Arena, 3- Service Above Self & 4- Champions in Life. Everyone will get to experience some unique physical activities in the greater Cedar Rapids/Iowa City area as well as serve their community.

- **CREATIVE COLLABORATION: ART & POETRY – .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

(Repeatable)

Mrs. Ahrens and Mrs. Tenley

Love creating art? Love composing words? Have something to say? Creatively combine your writing with images, and put together your own 'Zine! A 'zine (derived from the word magazine) is a small self-published booklet of original or found texts and images. In addition to creative time in the art room, you'll explore the works of other artists by going on trips to museums and by working alongside guest artists including Mount Vernon's own poet laureate and zine artist, Scott Russell Morris.

- **DIGGING INTO FINANCE – .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

(NOT repeatable)

Mr. Namanny and Mr. Roberts

This course will give students the opportunity to learn about different types of investments such as: Roth IRAs, IRAs, Cryptocurrency, debt leveraging, traditional stock/options, taxes, taking out loans, etc. Students will explore these ideas through the use of simulated investment situations, group projects, speakers and docuseries. As young adults, these topics are vital for financial stability for any life situation. The tools learned in this class will give students a beginning understanding and foundation for real life investing after high school.

- **DIGITAL CONTENT CREATION – .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

(Repeatable)

Mrs. Gage and Mr. Fugate

Work with your friends to create hype videos, highlight reels and social media graphics to be published online through The Mustang Moon or your own social media posts. Learn through experimentation! Capture photos and video with our digital SLR cameras, our drone, or even cell phones, including microphones and ring lights. Experiment in editing with ai software, iMovie, Canva, and Photoshop. Topic ideas will be generated by you! Past students have won national and statewide awards for their work in this class. No experience is required, but it is welcomed. Students will learn all the skills necessary to create digital media and post it online to TheMustangMoon.com and its social media accounts on YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, as well as on MustangVision.

- **EUROPE TRIP – .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

Mrs. Willems, Mr. Brand and Ms. Horton

(Registration for the Europe trip is closed.)

Rome and Athens are more than just cities to explore. They are living artifacts for you to explore from every angle. In Rome, the ancient treasures are sprinkled across the map, seamlessly integrated into everyday life. In Athens, most of the relics share a spotlight on center stage, high above modern society on the Acropolis. But each city changes your views of history, and offers a new perspective on the world today.

- **EXERCISE SCIENCE/SCIENCE OF SPORT – .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

(NOT repeatable)

Mr. Schwiebert and Mr. Whitman

Through classroom engagement and hands-on experience students will become familiar with the concepts relevant to sports medicine. Students will learn about common sports injuries and possible treatments. Students will develop a personal wellness plan to balance both athletic and emotional health.

Topics to be covered during this course:

- Anatomical terminology
- Anatomy of major joints / Injuries to these joints
- First Aid procedures and treatment for common injuries
- Utilize proper blood pressure and heart rate monitoring techniques
- Aerobic and Anaerobic exercise
- Use of both static and dynamic stretching
- Learn how to assess body composition, flexibility, cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength and endurance
- Utilize various relaxation techniques to promote healing and performance

Multiple guest speakers and a trip to a local Exercise science lab will be included.

- **FARM TO TABLE – .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

(NOT repeatable)

Mr. Kuker and Mrs. Lynner

The Farm to Table experience provides students with an opportunity to learn where food comes from, various farming and production methods, and the opportunity to explore foods in the labs. In the morning session students will tour local farms, food manufacturing facilities, and Kirkwood Community College's agricultural facilities. In the afternoon students will prepare recipes related to yeast breads, dairy, beef and pork and other farm to table topics. Students may need to bring money along for lunch on a few field trips.

- **HIT LIKE & SUBSCRIBE: THE SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE – .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

(NOT repeatable)

Mr. Borrison and Mrs. Sabers

Dive into the multifaceted world of social media as we connect, create, and critique. Students will explore the psychological impacts of social platforms while understanding digital citizenship and learning to harness social media for positive impact. Through a blend of discussion, hands-on activities, guest speakers, and creative projects, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of our digital world and discover potential future career opportunities.

- **LATINO EXPERIENCE - .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

(NOT repeatable)

Mrs. Carstensen and Mrs. Nichols

Experience life through the eyes of Latino and other immigrant populations across the Midwest. Let your senses guide your learning as you see, hear, and taste your way through music, food and cultural activities. During the day trips and overnight outings, you'll get a feel for the world that lies just outside Mount Vernon.

- **INTERNSHIP – .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

Mrs. Viter-Pitlik, Mr. VanWey and Mr. Voigt

(Course is for Juniors and Seniors only. Registration for the J-Term Internship course is closed.)

Mount Vernon High School specifically designed a time during the 9 days of J-Term for students to pursue an internship. An internship is an opportunity for a student to observe and gain hands-on experience with one or more employees at a business, non-profit organization, or government agency. This experience will help students gain first hand perspective of the skills and tasks needed to be successful in a business. The experience will also help students learn how to best apply their personal interests after high school. Other notes for this course: There is an application process for this course in the fall and all internship placements will be confirmed prior to Winter Break. Students will provide their own transportation and meals - students may request a sack lunch through the school.

- **MARINE BIOLOGY TRIP – .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

Mr. Thede, Mr. Karkosh, Mrs. Krapfl

(Registration for the Marine Biology trip is closed.)

The Marine biology J term class is a completely immersive and hands-on course designed to study the ecosystems of South Florida and the Florida Keys. Students will head to South Florida for seven days where they will visit a turtle hospital, travel to the dry Tortugas national park, swim with dolphins, snorkel on a reef, kayak the mangroves and tour the Everglades. Students will learn all about marine and freshwater plants and animals during the time in Florida.

- **PLANTS, POISONS AND PUZZLES – .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

Mrs. Appley and Mrs. Teague

(NOT repeatable)

Looking for some magic to spice up your J-term? If you enjoy fantasy, science, or games this class is for you! In Plants, Poisons, and Puzzles you will enroll in magic school, create your own fantasy character, and get a personalized education in botany, pharmacology, or cryptography classes. You will then use those skills to earn points, level up your characters, solve mysteries and puzzles, and go on adventures in class and out.

- **THEATRE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL – .5 credit**

J-TERM COURSE

(Repeatable)

Mr. Stephens and Mr. Wilkins

This course will explore six key areas:

- theatrical terminology, etiquette, and safety
- appreciation of theatre as an art form
- careers in theatre
- community, college, and professional theatrical spaces
- research on people and significant events in the theatre
- alumni guest speakers

We will also attend a professional touring production.

During the class, students will view and compare excerpts from film versions of Broadway shows.

The Mount Vernon Community School District will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status (for programs), socioeconomic status (for programs), disability, religion, and creed. Students, parents, employees and others doing business with or performing services with the district who feel that they have experienced discrimination are encouraged to contact Matt Thede, Equity Coordinator, Mount Vernon Community High School, 731 Palisades Road SW, Mount Vernon, IA 52314, telephone: [319-895-8843](tel:319-895-8843) x4005, where our district has a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. Inquiries may also be directed in writing to the Director of Civil Rights – Region VII, US Department of Education,; 310 W. Wisconsin Ave., Suite 800; Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203-2292 (phone: 414-291-1111) or to the Iowa Department of Education; Grimes State Office Building; Des Moines, Iowa, 50319-0146 (phone: 515-281-5294)