

## Dare To Be Me - 2024-2025: Semester 1 Syllabus



*Photo courtesy of Anja Pfeffer (2023-24 DTBM cohort)*

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### **Course Description:**

Dare To Be Me (DTBM) is a pedagogical philosophy and practice that invites students to embark on a personal and educational journey of courage, growth, belonging, and expression. It aims to foster *aliveness* through exploration and dialogue grounded in deep connection to place, to each other, and to one's full self. Students engage in a process of self-discovery and empowerment centered on holistic wellbeing so they can expand their comfort zones and become the best version of themselves.

As its title suggests, the focus of DTBM is on being rather than doing. By blending time in Nature with physical exercise, mindfulness, quiet introspection, meaningful reading, in-depth conversations and creative writing, students learn to understand themselves better and develop the courage to lean into who they want to become. DTBM addresses the whole heart-body-mind system, therefore growing students' ability to be present, curious, grateful, compassionate, adaptable and resilient even in times of adversity. Simultaneously, students learn to find and own their voice, identify their passions, advance their emotional literacy, and begin to articulate and embody their values. As a result, they leave this class with essential life and transferable skills that will complement and enhance their learning in all other academic subject areas.

**Guiding Question:** *How can I learn to thrive personally and academically?*

**Course Format:** The class will run every day during Blocks 1, 2, and 3 of Semester 1. Lots of time will be spent walking on the Hazen trails and engaging in a mixture of indoor and outdoor activities that are designed to make you come alive, build character, and grow your inner and outer strength. At the same time, major emphasis will be placed on developing your English skills. Aside from reading and analyzing a variety of relevant texts and writing regularly in your journal, you will learn to compose and respond to formal emails, conduct interviews ("The Big Journey" Project), and write meaningful thank you letters.

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Furthermore, your public speaking skills will be greatly enhanced as you participate in frequent conversations about things that matter to you and your peers, take leadership roles (such as facilitating gratitude circles), and present your ongoing learning to the group. In order for you to foster your sense of self as well as your academic confidence, you will often be asked to share excerpts from your work and receive positive feedback as well as constructive criticism. Expect to become an engaged and respectful participant in the classroom discourse and to contribute to a thriving and rigorous class community.

### General Course Outline & Topics of Discussion and Reflection:

Time Period	Themes	Key Questions <i>(partially adapted from <a href="#">The Six Equity Stances of Liberatory Project-Based Learning</a>)</i>
1st Quarter	Self-Expression (“Me”) & Belonging (“Be”)	1. On whose shoulders do I stand (land, ancestry, community, ...)? 2. Where is the place I feel most alive and connected in my heart, body, and mind? 3. Of which communities am I an integral part? 4. What does it look and feel like for me to be fully present in my life?
2nd Quarter	Growth (“To”) & Courage (“Dare”)	1. When have I felt that I was part of something bigger than myself? 2. What are values I admire and respect in others and for which I would like to strive? 3. Who are my role models in regards to developing my inner strength and courage? 4. What would it take to “change my story?”

*Disclaimer: This course outline is preliminary and subject to change based on the needs of the class and the discretion of the teacher.*

### Proficiencies:

#### **HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

*DTBM students move A LOT. Through daily breathing and stretching circles followed by walks in Nature, they develop the knowledge and skills to evaluate and improve their wellbeing as they begin to understand the role physical balance and fitness play in their overall health. Individual and group activities teach them to cooperate with classmates to solve problems and advocate for themselves and others in a*

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*respectful and responsible manner. In order to become health literate individuals, DTBM students gradually recognize how their own holistic health impacts their entire being and extends to everyone and everything around them. The DTBM class also provides students with ample opportunities to practice their interpersonal communication skills. This, in turn, increases their confidence in analyzing incoming information and influences and therefore helps them make more informed decisions. As healthier young people, DTBM students can access all other learning opportunities in deeper and more comprehensive ways.*

*The  $\frac{1}{2}$  PE credit is based on the [SHAPE America's National Standards & Grade-Level Outcomes for K-12 Physical Education](#). These were adopted by the Vermont State Board of Education in 2015 to guide physical education curriculum development in Vermont.*

**Standard 1:** The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.

**Standard 2:** The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.

**Standard 3:** The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.

**Standard 4:** The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.

**Standard 5:** The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

*DTBM students take ownership of their learning by developing their own unique voice and expressing their opinions clearly and effectively. They engage in respectful collaboration, hone their reading and research skills, and practice deep reflection and thoughtful revision in order to produce their finest work. Effective listening skills are essential for taking into consideration multiple points of view and refining one's own opinions. Through regular creative writing practices, DTBM students build their confidence, grow their imagination, increase their ability to feel into their own and others' experiences, and therefore improve their own overall sense of physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing.*

*The 1 ELA credit is based on the following [English Language Arts Proficiencies](#) which are woven into every aspect of the DTBM class, but they are specifically targeted and assessed in the daily small and large group discussions, regular reflective and creative journaling, and The Big Journey Project:*

**RL.9-10.2:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

**RI.9-10.10:** By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

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**W.9-10.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**W.9-10.5:** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

**W.9-10.10:** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

**SL.9-10.1:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**SL.9-10.4:** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

**L.9-10.1:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

**L.9-10.2:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

### **Student Responsibilities & Assessment:**

Students are expected to participate in all activities and discussions with a curious mind and an open heart. If they are absent from a class (no matter whether it is an excused or unexcused absence), it is their responsibility to contact Ms. Pfeffer and make up any missed assignments / tasks (see Schoology). All work will be graded on completion, effort, thoughtfulness, creativity, curiosity, connections, and growth.

**“The Big Journey” Project** gives students the opportunity to immerse themselves deeply in a topic they are passionate and/or curious about. Ideally, the topic they choose will teach them and their audience something new, enhance their academic skills, and expand their comfort zones. They will design their own learning experiences (research, inquiry, and presentation) based on the following questions:

1. *What do I want to learn?*
2. *How do I want to learn it?*
3. *How will I know that I have learned it?*

Their inquiry will include a wide range of diverse texts and sources, including articles, books, surveys, videos, as well as artwork. Most importantly, however, it will center on an interview with an expert in their field of interest. While class time will offer structure and support, students will also be expected to complete some of the research, reading and writing outside of class.

“The Big Journey” consists of 4 integral parts:

1. Brainstorming, Topic Approval, and Choice of Content Expert (by 9/29/23)
2. Outreach to Content Expert, Setting up Interview Date, and Brainstorming Interview Questions
3. Actual Interview, Additional Research, and Documentation of Learning (by 10/27/23)
4. 2-3 Page Summary, Presentation to the Class, and Thank You Letter to Expert (by 1/12/24)

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Activity / Assignment	Timeframe for Assessment	Focus Standards	Percentages of Grade
Movement-Based Activities	Ongoing	National PE Standards 1 through 5	100% of PE grade
Readings & Discussions (small and large group)	Ongoing	SL.9-10.1 RL.9-10.2 RI.9-10.10	30% of ELA grade
Journal Entries	Ongoing	W.9-10.4 W.9-10.10 L.9-10.1 L.9-10.2 L.9-10.6	30% of ELA grade
The Big Journey Project	Ongoing	RL.9-10.2 RI.9-10.10 W.9-10.4 W.9-10.5 W.9-10.10 SL.9-10.1 SL.9-10.4 L.9-10.1 L.9-10.2	40% of ELA grade

*IMPORTANT: Course grades will be the average of all proficiency scores for the course.*

### **Late and Incomplete Work**

**Late work:** Please know that failing to submit work on time will set you back and greatly diminish your chances of achieving the desired depth and quality of the final product of your work. We therefore ask you to **communicate any extenuating circumstances as soon as they come up so that we may develop a plan for you not to fall behind.**

**Incomplete work:** If your work is incomplete, you automatically risk not achieving the mastery of the proficiency that is being targeted in the assignment. That, in turn, can lead to not receiving a passing grade for the class. Please do your very best to hand in work that is completed to the very best of your ability and, again, communicate if there are hindering circumstances.

### **Plagiarism Policy**

When you present someone else's ideas as your own, you plagiarize. This can be related to you copying notes from your peers or copying and pasting information from books or the Internet, but it also includes using any artificial intelligence tools. Such academic dishonesty harms you and everyone else in the class because it keeps you from growing. We ask you to respect yourself and others by being keenly aware of and avoiding these kinds of practices. If, however, you do fall into the traps of being academically dishonest, the following will happen:

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1st offense: Conference with Ms. Pfeffer, Amy and Sol and a phone call to your parents/guardians. You will still be allowed to redo and resubmit the work, but your grade may be impacted.

2nd offense: You will receive a “0” for the assignment and a meeting will be called with your parents/guardians and the administration.

3rd offense: You will not receive credit for the course.

## **Required Texts & Resources:**

Any texts we will read as a class will be provided. You will receive a DTBM backpack that you are encouraged to use for the semester. In it, you will find writing utensils, a plastic sheet to sit on in the woods, and a rain poncho to keep you dry. Please use this backpack to carry your journal (provided to you, as well), your water bottle, and any extra gear. Due to the fact that we spend so much time outside, it is absolutely essential for you to **bring weather appropriate clothing to each class**. There are also winter jackets, boots, gloves, scarves, and hats available for you to use. You are welcome to keep a dry set of clothes and/or shoes in Ms. Pfeffer’s classroom.

IMPORTANT: If you have a medical prescription for an Epi-pen and/or Inhaler, please let Ms. Pfeffer, Amy and Sol know and have either or both with you at all times.

## **Food & Drink Policy:**

Please make sure you have eaten a healthy breakfast before coming to class. You will need the nutrition and energy in order to participate fully in all class activities. If you nevertheless get hungry, please let one of the adults in the group know and we will try to provide you with a snack. Always have water with you, but avoid any soda or other carbonated drinks. Juices and milk are fine.

## **Electronic Device Expectations:**

We will adhere to this year’s Hazen policy for students to have their phones off and in their backpacks during all classes. If you struggle to abide by this rule, we will either ask you to keep your phone in Ms. Pfeffer’s desk or in the cell phone hotel until the end of class. There will, however, be times when we will specifically ask you to use your phones, such as for taking photographs or recording interviews or presentations. This is up to the discretion of the teachers and should not be abused. If you have any extenuating circumstances and need access to your phone, please communicate with us ahead of time.

## **Additional Words of Caution:**

With the amount of time we will be spending in the woods, there is a good chance of encountering ticks, especially as the seasons change. Please **do a thorough tick check when you get home every day!!**

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PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN:

My parents / guardians and I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood this syllabus for the 2024-25 Dare To Be Me (DTBM) class. I hereby agree to abide by all the policies.

I can be included in photographs and videos. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

I can participate in all outdoor activities. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student / Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent / Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent / Guardian

**Primary Parent/Guardian Contact Information:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

Preferred Contact (please circle one):

Phone

Email

ParentSquare