Thacher educates students for lives of leadership and service. Our students enjoy a profoundly engaging intellectual life and develop a foundation for lifelong learning. Graduates also attribute their preparation to qualities cultivated outside the classroom: the resourcefulness and responsibility developed through camping and riding; the integrity that comes from living by an Honor Code; the sense of purpose found in community engagement and leadership.

At the core of our intellectual community lies the relationship between students and teachers, nurtured and supported by our Honor Code, which is exemplified by unproctored examinations in the 11th and 12th grade, and our student-led Honor Council.

**Thacher by the Numbers**

- **1889** founding of the school
- **263** students from **23** states and **10** countries
- **11** the average class size
- **32** day students, **231** boarding students
- **32%** of students receive financial aid
- **427** acres in the foothills of California’s Coastal Mountain Range and Los Padres National Forest
- **72%** of faculty hold advanced degrees
- **6:1** student-faculty ratio
- **12%** international students, **54%** self-identifying students of color

**Academic Philosophy and Program**

In September 2019, Thacher implemented a new curriculum that no longer included Advanced Placement courses. The 17 offerings formerly designated as AP were redesigned as Advanced or Honors courses. This curriculum is the result of a multi-year effort to develop a program grounded in a broader, more expansive definition of rigor and mastery; it is anchored by Foundational Studies in 9th and 10th grade, and followed by Advanced Studies in 11th and 12th grade. The latter involves deeper dives into various subjects, interdisciplinary courses, opportunities for independent study and project-based learning. The academic program continues to culminate with the Senior Exhibition—a capstone, independent research project. By stepping away from the AP, Thacher is confident we are better nurturing the learning liveliness of our students, their talents, passion, drive, and intensity of focus.

**COVID-19 Response**

In response to the Covid-19 health crisis, Thacher closed its campus and moved our 2020 Spring Trimester online with a Pass/No Pass grading system. With students from across the country and the world in our community, our new grading system acknowledged the different environments our students found themselves in as they pursued their online courses. Committed to equity and access, we wanted to ensure that no students were unduly penalized for those situations. To earn a Pass, students had to complete all formative and summative assignments and demonstrate proficiency. The Pass/No Pass grades were not computed into the students’ GPAs.
2021-2022 Course Offerings

Science
- Integrated Science I, II
- Biology
- Field Biology and Conservation
- Advanced Physics*
- Advanced Biology*
- Advanced Chemistry*
- Advanced Environmental Science*
- Advanced Field Biology and Conservation*
- Advanced Psychology*
- Astronomy Research*

Integrated Science I, II

Biology
- Field Biology and Conservation
- Advanced Biology*
- Advanced Chemistry*

Mathematics
- Math II, III, IV
- Math II Honors
- Math III Honors*
- Math IV Honors*
- Calculus I
- Calculus I Honors*
- Calculus II Honors*
- Multivariable Calculus*
- Honors Statistics*
- Advanced Computer Science*
- Robotics and Electrical Engineering*
- Advanced Topics in Data Structures and Algorithms*

World Language
- Mandarin I, II, III
- Advanced Mandarin A*
- French I, II, III, IV
- Advanced French A, B*
- Latin II, III
- Advanced Latin A, B*
- Spanish I, II, III, IV
- Advanced Spanish A*

History
- The West and the World
- Non-Western History
- Honors US History*
- Advanced Study in Economic Theory*
- Honors Contemporary Ethical Issues*

English
- English I, II
- English III Honors*
- English IV Honors*

Fine and Performing Arts
- Introduction to the Arts
- Honors Acting
- Ceramics
- Advanced Ceramics
- Wood Design
- Introduction to Photography
- Advanced Studio Art*
- Intermediate Studio Art
- Honors Studio Practice*
- Honors Art History*
- Honors Chamber Singers*
- Chamber String Ensemble
- Jazz Ensemble
- Advanced Jazz Combo*
- Jazz Workshop
- Electronic Music and Composition
- Honors Music Theory, History, and Practice*

Grading Criteria
Thacher’s grading system is traditional, and we do not rank our students. The standard academic load is five courses, all academic solids, each trimester. Students with a passion for the arts typically carry six courses.

Unweighted GPA
The unweighted GPA includes all graded work 9-12.

Average: 3.67
Middle (50%): 3.48 - 3.90

Weighted GPA
The weighted GPA is computed for all graded work 10-12, and it gives students an extra point for honors and advanced courses (A=5.0, B=4.0).

Average: 4.25
Middle (50%): 4.05 - 4.53

2022-2023 Course Offerings

Physics
- Chemistry
- Introduction to Programming
- Data Structures & Robotics*
- Latin I
- Advanced Music Theory*

2018-2021 Course Offerings

on Senior Transcripts

Physics
- Chemistry
- Introduction to Programming
- Data Structures & Robotics*
- Latin I
- Advanced Music Theory*
Thacher Graduation Requirements

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of mathematics
- 3 years of history
- 3 years of laboratory science
- 3 years of a foreign language
- 2 years of fine arts
- Completion of Senior Exhibition

In addition to shifting to a 2-year integrated science program, which allows all students to take the equivalent of a year of physics, chemistry, and biology by the end of 10th grade, you will also note that we have shifted to a 3-year laboratory science requirement. We made this shift because our data showed that the majority of Thacher students were, on their own, taking well beyond our former requirement of two years.

Senior Exhibition

In addition to their regular course load, all seniors are required to complete a Senior Exhibition Project prior to graduation. This year-long project requires seniors to produce a significant body of research on a topic of their choosing, culminating in a thirty minute presentation to the school community.

Exhibitions have included:
- Promised Reform in Saudi Arabia
- The Asteroid Mining
- The Cost of Endangered Species Conservation
- Mass Incarceration and Rehabilitation

Backcountry Requirement

All students are required to participate in our Backcountry Program by going on week-long backpacking trips. On these trips, undertaken by the entire community each fall and spring, the focus is minimal impact on the wilderness as well as self-sufficiency and cooperative teamwork. Camping encourages students to develop a deeper understanding and connection with the natural world while presenting them with both physical and personal challenges that foster character. In addition, the outdoors provides valuable, fertile ground for faculty-student and peer friendships.

Horse Program Requirement

Unique to Thacher is our Horse Program—designed to complement the learning that takes place in our classrooms with real world experience and responsibility in our barns. All new students are required to learn to ride and care for a horse—freshmen for an entire year, transfer students for one trimester. Mucking, feeding, and riding are part of every rider’s day, including on weekends. All students must pass a riding test, take a horse camping trip into the Sespe Wilderness, and compete in Gymkhana (western racing). Talented riders can be elected to captain one of 3 school teams that compete in Big Gymkhana each May; they can earn top distinctions that allow them to lead horse camping trips without faculty supervision. With grit and courage, a select few earn a spot in the Silver Dollar Pick-up roster each year. The great majority of our riders are novices to the sport when they arrive, yet about a quarter remain in the program long after completing their requirement.

School Year Abroad & Maine Coast Semester

Rising eleventh graders can apply and be selected for:
- School Year Abroad (SYA)—a resident program in France, Spain, Italy and China
- Chewonki Semester School—an opportunity to spend half a year focusing on ecology and environmental science in Wiscasset, Maine.

While we did not compete in interscholastic sports in 2020-2021 because of COVID-19, we remained committed to the value of physical and afternoon activities for the health and wellbeing of our students. Students participated in intramural sports daily and competitions, such as our inaugural Playa de Piedra Beach Volleyball Tournament. They picked up new activities such as skateboarding, Bachata, surfing, and Hip Hop dancing.
Field Biology and Conservation
“Turtles, water, and mapping, oh my!” This course covers the topics of field biology and conservation through our unique location in the Ojai Valley. Students spend class time in two distinct and amazing locations, the Los Padres National Forest and the Turtle Conservancy. Students learn field techniques such as GPS tracking, drone mapping, camera traps, ethograms, habitat assessments, and water testing. Global issues can be studied through local systems, and Thacher students leverage this throughout the course. Students also study and work on conservation efforts for the Southern Pacific Pond Turtle, our own vulnerable and only native turtle. A field station in the Sespe, set up by students, gathers longitudinal data in cooperation with the USGS.

Advanced Chemistry: Application in Art and Archaeology
Recently spotlighted in the University of California High School Articulation Bulletin, this class takes a look at the inorganic chemistry behind art and archaeology. It also examines the importance and process behind restoration and conservation of cultural heritage artifacts. Students study thermodynamic calculations of redox reactions in the three-stage firing process of ancient Athenian black- and red-figure vases, analyze Roman Imperial coins as chemical confirmation of the standardization of ancient Roman smelting and minting practices under the reign of Augustus, and study ancient Egyptian glasses at Malkata and Lisht as evidence of the early use of metallurgical slags as coloring agents in decorative glass beads.

Astronomy Research
Not many high school students can say that they have a state-of-the-art observatory on campus or that they are engaged in research for NASA, but Thacher students can. In this advanced-level science course, students focus on the detection and characterization of eclipsing binary stars and transiting exoplanets; the nightly monitoring of interesting targets, such as Tabby’s Star and active galactic nuclei; a search for nearby supernovae; and the development of customized automation software for our observatory. This college-level research course allows students to have the truly unique opportunity to work on projects that are connected to professional scientific research being conducted by astronomers and astrophysicists at institutions across the country.

Honors Contemporary Ethical Issues
Tied with our Marvin Shagam Program in Ethics and Global Responsibility, this class allows students to dive into the topics of today, including the ethical ramifications of COVID-19, affirmative action, homelessness in Ojai and the surrounding areas, and voting laws in presidential elections. With an emphasis on interdisciplinary learning, students in this class partner with art, statistics, and Spanish classes to enhance their understanding of current global and local issues and work towards creating community engagement to rally for change.