



THE HIGH SCHOOL CANON: THEN AND NOW

July 7 and 8, 2025 • 1:00–3:00 p.m.

HUMANITIES TEXAS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEBINAR SERIES

July 7, 2025
1:00–3:00 p.m.

“Then”

The high school canon is not just a product of cultural decisions but of a period when literature was the heart of the English language arts curriculum. In this webinar, participants will examine primary and secondary documents from the mid-twentieth century to examine what English education—and the high school canon—looked like in this period. Participants will collectively brainstorm which values and learning objectives from the past deserve recovery in classrooms.

July 8, 2025
1:00–3:00 p.m.

“Now”

Teachers are assigning many of the same books as a generation ago, but English language arts has changed. In this webinar, participants will look at contemporary strategies for teaching the longstanding #1 book in the high school canon, *Romeo and Juliet*, that are designed to engage today’s students. By comparing these strategies to how teachers have taught the play in the past, participants will reflect on how goals have changed and what might be recovered from the past.



FACULTY

REBECCA GUERRERO is an English language arts teacher at Young Women's STEAM Research & Preparatory Academy in El Paso. In this role, she teaches multiple humanities courses, ranging from Pre-AP English to AP Literature, and a women and gender studies-focused AP capstone program. She is passionate about project-based learning and creating opportunities for critical literacy and creativity in her classroom. Rebecca received the 2025 James F. Veninga Outstanding Teaching of Humanities Award recipient from Humanities Texas.

ANDREW NEWMAN is a professor of English at Stony Brook University in New York. With support from a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, he's currently writing *A Nation of Readers: Lessons from the High School Canon Era*, a history of the teaching and learning of the books that have been assigned to generations of students.

JONNA PERRILLO has been an education historian and professor of English education at The University of Texas of El Paso since 2005. She is the author of numerous articles and two books, *Uncivil Rights: Teachers, Unions, and Race in the Battle for School Equity* (University of Chicago Press, 2012) and *Educating the Enemy: Teaching Nazis and Mexicans in the Cold War Borderlands* (Chicago, 2022). She is currently completing a book titled "Teaching in the Time of Book Bans: Teachers and Librarians Speak Out About Censorship" that will be published with Harvard Education Press later this year. Since 2021, she and Andrew Newman have co-directed a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) summer program for high school teachers, "Making the Good Reader and Citizen: The History of Literature Instruction in American Schools." Her work has been supported and recognized by the NEH, the Rockefeller Foundation, the American Education Research Association, the Spencer Foundation, the National Parks Service, the History of Education Society, the Western History Association, and the Border Regional Library Association. Her writing has been featured in *Slate*, *TIME* magazine, the *Boston Review*, the *Washington Post*, *Education Week*, *El Paso Matters*, and on PBS and National Public Radio.