

# Core Curriculum Overview

Every degree program in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is made up of three components: the Core Curriculum, courses in the major, and free electives. **Free electives** are required for all students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and are often used to explore academic interests and determine educational directions. They may also be used to fulfill minors, concentrations, or additional majors.

Courses in the Core Curriculum treat a broad range of disciplines from a variety of approaches; at the same time, the Core Curriculum strives to ensure depth of study and intellectual sophistication while recognizing that learning implies different modes of inquiry. An essential component of the Core Curriculum is a focus on writing. In the pursuit of their degrees, students take a number of courses in which writing requirements play a central role, from the Foundation Courses, including the Augustine and Culture Seminars and the Core Ethics course, to the Core Literature and Writing Seminar. In addition, each major program includes a required research course, normally taken during junior or sophomore years, and a senior capstone course, which is a significant culminating experience that leads students to reflect on the various components of their major curriculum.

The Core aims to advance culture in a broad sense, training students to understand and to appreciate the interrelated patterns of customary beliefs and practices, social forms, aesthetics, and material traits that act to define a culture and its position within a larger historical and intellectual framework. This educational program does not simply look to the past, but acknowledges that culture is vibrant and continuously redefined. The Core Curriculum challenges students to understand how the present is recognizably formed from past influences, and that in order to assess our culture and arrive at a view of its future, students must be trained to scrutinize and bring into perspective the relationship of the present culture with that of the past.

In fostering active participation in learning, the Core prepares students to become active participants within society, to engage in the process of informed political debate, and to encourage an understanding and appreciation of the diversity of cultures and experiences, a respect for the individual, and the development of a multi-cultural and international perspective. The Core thus encourages personal development in preparing students to regard themselves as citizens living in a democratic society, as belonging to a world community, and as therefore having communal responsibilities.