

General Studies Program

Liberal education values intellectual curiosity and an approach to learning informed by multiple perspectives. The General Studies Program is the primary means of achieving such breadth and perspective. The program consists of the Whitman First-Year Seminars (The First-Year Experience) and the Distribution Requirements. The First-Year Seminars provide a foundation for learning at Whitman through interdisciplinary fall learning communities exploring complex questions and spring seminars focused on making powerful arguments. Through the Distribution Requirements, students gain insights into disparate areas of knowledge and ways of knowing emphasized in different disciplines, while also coming to understand the ways in which disciplines often overlap or merge with one another. Students are encouraged to explore connections and divergences between fields and approaches to knowledge through their distribution studies. Courses in each area will vary in the emphasis they give to the elements described and in the approach they take to their study.

Writing Proficiency Requirement: Nearly all courses at Whitman require proficiency in writing, so the College will evaluate the writing skills of all entering students before Registration. Shortly after arrival on campus, all entering students will write in response to a prompt. Those writing samples, with names removed, will be evaluated by a panel of Whitman writing professors to identify those entering students who would most benefit from attention to their writing skills. Before entering students' first meetings with their advisors, an e-mail will be sent to the Whitman accounts of all students required to enroll in Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse (RWPD)170 in their first term at the College. Advisors will get this information at the same time and will help those students plan their schedules with this addition in mind. The registrar will automatically enroll students into the sections of RWPD 170 that do not conflict with their chosen schedules.

First-Year Experience: All students, with the exceptions noted below for transfer students, are required to successfully complete the two-semester sequence of the Whitman First-Year Seminars (General Studies 175, 176) during their first year of study at Whitman College. In addition, the Distribution Requirements must be completed.

Distribution

All students are required to complete the following Distribution Requirements:

1. The **cultural pluralism** requirement focuses primarily on underrepresented cultural perspectives. In addition, courses in this area foster a greater understanding of the diversity or interconnectedness of cultures. Such courses must offer in-depth coverage of, and must focus on, at least one of the following: cultural pluralism; power disparities among social groups; methodological or theoretical approaches used in the interpretation of cultural difference; marginality within categories such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or class; and/or the perspectives of non-dominant groups.

Cultural Pluralism – Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to do one or more of the following:

- Engage with ideas and people that expand one's cultural perspectives.
- Articulate how different cultural backgrounds affect interactions or relationships with others.
- Articulate complex relationships arising from the intersection of various aspects of culture, such as language, gender, history, values, politics, religious practices, and unequal distributions of power and resources.
- Navigate differences by drawing on relevant cultural frames of reference and adapting perspectives accordingly.
- Apply different methodological and theoretical approaches to interpret cultural difference.

Students must complete **two courses totaling at least six credits** designated as fulfilling the requirement in cultural pluralism. These courses include:

Anthropology 101, 153, 201, 210, 223, 224, 225,
233, 238, 246, 257, 258, 306, 313, 321, 328, 345,
350, 358
Art History and Visual Culture Studies 210, 225,
235, 243, 246, 248, 257, 260, 353, 356, 357, 495
Asian and Middle Eastern Studies — all courses
BBMB 430

Chinese — all courses
Classics 200, 205
Economics 258, 266, 294, 345
English 200, 245, 246, 346, 347, 376, 389
Environmental Studies 205, 306, 313, 335, 339, 345
Film and Media Studies 255, 307, 340, 345, 350

French and Francophone Studies — all courses (except 491, 492)
 Gender Studies — all courses
 German — all courses (except 352, 391, 392)
 Global Literatures 210, 222, 301, 305, 309, 312, 320, 322, 325, 328, 338, 395, 407
 Greek — all courses
 Hispanic Studies — all courses (except 491, 492)
 History 109, 110, 112, 121, 127, 128, 188, 205, 208, 209, 210, 214, 215, 217, 218, 219, 220, 223, 225, 230, 235, 241, 243, 246, 247, 248, 254, 264, 265, 267, 268, 280, 283, 286, 287, 288, 300, 302, 310, 313, 314, 319, 322, 323, 332, 344, 348, 349, 360, 364, 366, 370, 384, 393, 394, 395, 494
 Interdisciplinary Studies 220, 230, 240, 300
 Japanese — all courses
 Latin — all courses

Music 115, 129, 160, 258, 310, 354, 360
 Philosophy 110, 216, 218, 219, 235, 247, 251, 318, 340, 360, 461
 Politics 114, 119, 207, 208, 228, 254, 260, 301, 311, 312, 325, 333, 334, 349, 359, 363, 365, 367
 Psychology 218, 231, 239, 309, 311, 319, 336
 Race and Ethnic Studies— all courses
 Religion 100, 103, 109, 110, 115, 117, 134, 153, 154, 160, 170, 205, 207, 208, 209, 213, 214, 217, 219, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 236, 245, 250, 251, 260, 290, 291, 292, 304, 305, 307, 310, 321, 325, 347, 350, 358, 387
 Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse 250, 270
 Sociology 110, 117, 205, 209, 229, 235, 257, 258, 259, 267, 269, 270, 251, 271, 278, 279, 290, 309, 310, 325, 337, 360, 369
 Theater and Dance 118, 210, 250

Note: Some departments offer special topics in any given year that may or may not be applicable toward the cultural pluralism requirement. For more information, see the individual course descriptions.

Many courses taken while on a study abroad program or on a domestic urban studies program may be approved to fulfill this requirement. Contact the Off-Campus Studies Office or the General Studies Committee for more information.

2. Courses in the **fine arts** develop creative problem solving skills, the ability to exercise artistic expression, and an understanding of theoretical and analytical approaches to the process of making a work of art. Courses in this area engage students in artistic production and help students critically analyze their own or others' works of music, visual and verbal art, dance, film, media and theater.

Fine Arts – Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to do one or more of the following:

- Solve problems in creative ways
- Recognize the techniques used in at least one art form
- Understand different theoretical approaches to artistic production
- Develop their ability to express themselves artistically
- Critically analyze their own and others' artistic work.

Students must complete **a minimum of six credits in the fine arts**. This requirement is satisfied by courses in:

Art — all courses	French 260
Art History and Visual Culture Studies — all courses	History 224
Classics 224, 319, 377	Music — all courses
English 150, 250, 251, 252, 320, 321, 322	Philosophy 239, 302
Environmental Studies 314, 319, 347	Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse 110
Film and Media Studies 260, 360	Theater and Dance (except 235, 372)

Note: Courses designated Independent Study may not be used to satisfy the fine arts distribution requirement. ***A student may not use more than eight credits from any one department to satisfy the requirements in humanities and fine arts.***

3. Courses in the **humanities** focus attention on the ways that human beings have understood and interpreted the world around them as well as the processes by which humans come to see life as meaningful. Study in the humanities equips students with the tools to analyze and interpret texts, artistic works, material objects, beliefs and

values through close reading and consideration of components such as cultural and historical context, genre, and language.

Humanities – Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to do one or more of the following:

- Read texts, be they literary, philosophical, artistic, religious, or material in nature, with precision and generosity
- Analyze and interpret texts with precision, assessing their form and content both on the texts' own terms and through critical lenses informed by other texts
- Understand how language, genre, cultural and historical context can shape a text and our interpretation of it
- Effectively communicate, through written and spoken words, insights drawn from the works they are reading and interpreting
- Recognize and appreciate the aesthetic, moral, and linguistic dimensions of complex problems

Students must complete **a minimum of six credits in the humanities**. This requirement is satisfied by courses in:

Anthropology 223, 224, 225, 345, 350	Global Literatures — all courses
Art History and Visual Culture Studies — all courses	Greek — all courses
Art 114	Hispanic Studies — all courses
Asian and Middle Eastern Studies 105, 106, 301	History 215, 224, 225, 313
Chinese — all courses	Japanese — all courses
Classics — all courses (except 400)	Latin — all courses
English (except 150, 250, 251, 320, 321, 322, 389)	Music 297, 298, 299
Environmental Studies 202, 203, 205, 217, 226, 227, 230, 235, 247, 308, 335, 339, 340, 345, 347, 349, 350, 358, 360, 365	Philosophy — all courses (except 200, 260 and 488)
Film and Media Studies (except 260, 305, 360)	Politics 121, 260
French and Francophone Studies — all courses	Race and Ethnic Studies 225, 230, 305, 325
Gender Studies 250, 330, 331	Religion — all courses
German — all courses (except 352)	Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse — all courses (except 110, 205, 263)
	Theater and Dance 118, 210, 218, 234, 235, 250, 281, 330, 357, 372, 373, 377, 381

Note: Courses designated Independent Study may not be used to satisfy the humanities Distribution Requirement. *A student may not use more than eight credits from any one department to satisfy the requirements in humanities and fine arts.*

4. Courses with a significant **quantitative focus** students develop the skills necessary to critically analyze numerical or graphical data, to develop abstract quantitative frameworks, and to develop a facility and acumen with quantitative reasoning techniques and their applicability to disciplines across the liberal arts.

Quantitative Analysis – Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to do one or more of the following:

- Perform computations associated with a model and make conclusions based on the results
- Represent, communicate, and analyze ideas and data using symbols, graphs, or tables
- Analyze and interpret data using statistical methods

Students must complete **one course of three or more credits in quantitative analysis**. This requirement is satisfied by the following courses:

Astronomy 110, 177, 178, 179	Mathematics 125, 126, 128, 215, 225, 247
Chemistry 100, 102, 125, 126, 140	Music 426
Computer Science 167, 215, 220, 275	Philosophy 200, 260, 488
Economics 227, 327, 479	Physics 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 155, 156, 245, 267
Environmental Studies 207	Psychology 210

Note: Courses designated Independent Study may not be used to satisfy the quantitative analysis Distribution Requirement.

5. Courses in the **sciences** give students the background necessary to inquire about how the natural world is structured and operates. Students will be exposed to methodologies and techniques that allow them to form hypotheses, then to examine, justify, or refute their hypotheses through scientific evidence and analysis of observations.

Sciences – Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to do one or more of the following:

- Demonstrate familiarity with one or more scientific methods of inquiry
- Articulate fundamental theories in a science using precise terminology of the field
- Formulate a hypothesis, given a problem or questions, and design a valid experiment to test it.
- Collect, interpret, and analyze scientific data
- Apply the principles of scientific inquiry to civic and personal issues.

Students must complete **a minimum of six credits in science**, including at least one course with a laboratory. This requirement is satisfied by courses in:

Astronomy — all 100 and 200-level courses
BBMB — no courses apply
Biology — all 100-level courses, 205, 210
Chemistry — 100, 102, 125, 126, 135, 136, 140, 245
Geology — all 100 and 200-level courses (except 140, 158, 258)
Physics — all 100 and 200-level courses (except 115, 116)
Psychology 215, 225
Science 180

Note: Any laboratory or course with a regularly scheduled laboratory may be used to fulfill the laboratory component of this requirement — see the individual course descriptions.

Note: Courses designated Independent Study may not be used to satisfy the sciences Distribution Requirement.

6. Studies in the **social sciences** help students analyze complex relationships and interconnections within and/or among individuals, social formations, texts and institutions across time and/or across local, national, and/or global contexts.

Social Sciences - Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to do one or more of the following:

- Compare and contrast social institutions, structures, and processes across a range of historical periods, cultures, and societies around the globe.
- Analyze complex behavior and relationships within and across individuals and social contexts.
- Demonstrate familiarity with social science methods in the context of explaining or predicting individual and collective behavior and decision-making.
- Apply social science principles to personal, social, and/or organizational issues.

Students must complete **a minimum of six credits in the social sciences**. This requirement is satisfied by courses in:

Anthropology — all courses	Politics — all courses
Classics 221	Psychology — all courses (except 210, 215, and some courses designated Seminars or Tutorials — see the individual course descriptions)
Economics — all courses	Race and Ethnic Studies 305
Environmental Studies 306, 307, 313, 322 329, 345, 35, 362	Religion 223, 224, 225, 260, 325, 350
Gender Studies 330, 331	Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse 342, 360
Hispanic Studies 456	Sociology — all courses
History — all courses	

Note: Courses designated Independent Study may not be used to satisfy the social sciences Distribution Requirement.

Additional information regarding Distribution Requirements:

All courses in sports studies, recreation and athletics, and those courses in environmental studies not specifically designated in the distribution areas listing above, do not count toward the completion of the Distribution Requirements.

A student may not apply any individual course toward more than one of the distribution areas, *with the exception of the courses used to fulfill the requirement in quantitative analysis*. For example, a student may use History 212 to meet either the requirement in social sciences or the requirement in cultural pluralism but not both. In the event that the same cross-listed class applies to different distribution areas, the course may be applied to either distribution area referenced by the indicated departmental registration rubric. For example, Classics 224 cross-listed with Art History 224 may be applied to the fine arts or humanities distribution area.

Distribution Requirements may not be satisfied by credits obtained for work in the high school (e.g., Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate). With the exception of Economics 493/494, courses taken with the P-D-F grade option cannot be used to satisfy Distribution Requirements.

Five of the six Distribution Requirements should be completed by the end of the sixth semester of college work. The total requirements must be fulfilled not later than the student's seventh semester.

Transfer students entering with fewer than 58 acceptable credits (i.e., below junior level) must complete the First-Year Experience unless, upon appeal, the Board of Review finds that they have passed comparable courses at another institution.

First-Year Seminars

The two-semester First-Year Seminars sequence combines a fall semester focused on interdisciplinary intellectual exploration and risk-taking with a spring semester focused on in-depth investigation of and argumentation about an important topic.

First-Year Seminars will cultivate students' intellectual curiosity, developing their abilities to inquire into complex issues, formulate and support coherent arguments, and engage in constructive, transformative dialogue with their professors and peers. All first-year seminars are developed with consideration of difference, cultural inclusiveness, and contending perspectives.

The two semesters will be taught as separate courses, with separate instructors and student cohorts. The P-D-F grade option may not be elected for this course.

175 Exploring Complex Questions

Fall

Staff

4 credits

Students are introduced to the liberal arts through interdisciplinary, collaborative, discussion-based courses, housed in 4-6 learning communities, which each include faculty from at least three different disciplines. Each Exploring Complex Questions learning community engages a common topic, either a theme explored through a series of questions, or a large question explored through a variety of subtopics. Common elements within a learning community might include one or more of the following: a shared syllabus, syllabi that share some common texts, or syllabi with common activities (speakers/symposia/excursions, etc.). All Exploring Complex Questions seminars incorporate some aspect of information literacy to increase students' abilities to independently explore complex topics. Distribution area: none.

Exploring Complex Questions – Learning Goals

Students will be able to:

- read inquisitively and generously
- read with attention to detail and nuance
- engage with texts of varied genres and mediums
- formulate productive questions that guide exploration of a complex text (broadly construed)
- use discussion as a means to discover and reconsider ideas
- learn collaboratively with classmates and professor
- use writing as a means to discover and reconsider ideas
- understand how a writer's overt purposes and readers' expectations influence the structure and style of writing

176 Making Powerful Arguments

Spring

Staff

4 credits

As students progress into the second half of their first year they choose a seminar focused on in-depth investigation of an important topic and work on developing and supporting arguments. Making Powerful Arguments seminars are offered on a wide range of topics but all share common writing assignment parameters. All Spring Seminars incorporate library research skills and develop students' proficiency with and understanding of citation practices.

Distribution area: none.

Making Powerful Arguments – Learning Goals

Students will be able to:

- read inquisitively and generously
- read with attention to detail and nuance
- practice respectful but rigorous debate
- learn collaboratively with classmates and professor
- use writing as a means to discover and reconsider ideas
- develop arguable and defensible thesis statements
- integrate appropriate evidence to support argumentative claims