

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 the start of the Fall term. Registration. 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 require additional attention to their writing skills. This information will be added to student's academic evaluation, and students should plan to take RWPD 170 in their first year (and preferably their first semester). 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, 228, 233, 238, 240, 246, 303, 313, 320, 321, 345, 350, 358	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
Art History 135, 143, 146, 210, 257, 260, 325, 353, 356, 357, 495	Interdisciplinary Studies 220, 230, 240, 300
Asian and Middle Eastern Studies — all courses	Indigeneity, Race, And Ethnicity Studies— all courses
BBMB 430	Japanese — all courses
Chinese — all courses	Latin — all courses
Classics 200, 205	Music 115, 129, 160, 258, 310, 354, 360
Economics 258, 266, 345	Philosophy 110, 216, 218, 219, 222, 235, 247, 251, 318, 340, 360, 365, 415, 461
English 245, 246, 346, 376	Politics 114, 119, 120, 125, 207, 228, 250, 254, 255, 260, 301, 308, 311, 312, 325, 330, 333, 334, 335, 349, 350, 359, 363, 365, 367
Environmental Studies 205, 302, 335, 339, 345, 350	Psychology 218, 231, 239, 309
Film and Media Studies 255, 305, 307, 340, 345, 350	Religion 100, 109, 110, 115, 116, 117, 134, 153, 170, 180, 205, 207, 208, 217, 219, 220, 223, 224, 225, 236, 260, 270, 290, 291, 292, 303, 304, 307, 310, 321, 325, 350, 358, 370
French and Francophone Studies — all courses (except 491, 492)	Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse 250
Gender Studies — all courses	Sociology 117, 205, 209, 229, 235, 251, 257, 258, 259, 267, 269, 270, 278, 279, 309, 325, 337, 360, 369
German — all courses (except 352, 391, 392)	Theater and Dance 118, 210, 250
Global Literatures 210, 222, 225, 230, 301, 305, 309, 312, 320, 322, 325, 338, 395, 407	
Greek — all courses	
Hispanic Studies — all courses (except 491, 492)	
History 109, 110, 112, 120, 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,	

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

Art History — all courses

Classics 224, 319, 377	Hispanic Studies 322
English 150, 250, 251, 252, 320, 321, 322	History 224
Environmental Studies 314, 319, 347	Music — all courses
Film and Media Studies 260, 360	Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse 110
French 230, 260	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, 303, 345, 350	Greek — all courses
Art History — all courses	Hispanic Studies — all courses (except 322)
Art 114	History 165, 180, 215, 224, 225, 226, 313
Asian and Middle Eastern Studies 105, 106, 301	Indigeneity, Race, And Ethnicity Studies 180, 225, 230, 305, 325
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, 302, 308, 335, 339, 340, 345, 347, 349, 350, 358, 360, 365	Philosophy — all courses (except 200, and 488)
Film and Media Studies — all courses (except 260, 360)	Politics 121, 260
French and Francophone Studies — all courses	Religion — all courses
Gender Studies 250, 330, 331	Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse — all courses (except 110, 205, 263)
German — all courses (except 352)	Theater and Dance 118, 210, 218, 234, 235, 250, 281, 330, 357, 372, 373, 377, 381
Global Literatures — all courses	

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	Music 426
Chemistry 100, 102, 125, 126, 140	Philosophy 200, 488
Computer Science 167, 215, 220, 275	Physics 101, 102, 103, 105, 155, 156, 245, 267
Economics 227, 327, 479	Psychology 210
Environmental Studies 207	Sociology 208
Mathematics 124, 125, 126, 128, 215, 225, 247	

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, 135)
 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

Classics 221

Economics — all courses

Environmental Studies 307, 322, 329, 333, 345, 350,
362

Gender Studies 330, 331

Hispanic Studies 456

History — all courses

Indigeneity, Race, and Ethnicity Studies 305

Politics — all courses

Psychology — all courses (except 210, 215, 325 and
some courses designated Seminars or Tutorials —
see the individual course descriptions)

Religion 223, 224, 225, 260, 303, 325, 350

Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse 342, 360

Sociology — 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
- adapt writing to different forms, genres, and/or audience

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