

## **AXLE: The Liberal Arts Requirement**

Every student in the College of Arts and Science must complete the Liberal Arts requirement before graduation. The Liberal Arts requirement consists of the successful completion of thirteen courses from the College of Arts and Science. Only courses taken at Vanderbilt University or taught by Vanderbilt University faculty in off-campus programs may be used to fulfill this requirement. All College of Arts and Science courses fulfill one of these Liberal Arts requirements, with the exceptions of Vanderbilt Visions, English 100, all courses carrying less than three hours of academic credit, and any other course that departments choose to exclude.

Although some courses may be appropriately placed in more than one distribution category, each A&S course shall be placed in the single, most appropriate category, as determined by a recommendation agreed upon by the Implementation and Curriculum Committees and the faculty and departments responsible for each course. The listing for each course in the Course Catalog will indicate the category in which that course has been placed.

These thirteen courses must be distributed as outlined below. They must be taken from at least **seven** departments or subject areas. Advanced Placement credit may not be used to satisfy the liberal arts requirement, but it may be used to partially satisfy the 120-hour graduation requirement, as permitted by College of Arts and Science rules.

### **a. Humanities and the Creative Arts (3 courses)**

Courses in the humanities and the creative arts challenge students to examine their personal understanding of life and how their individual experiences overlap with those of the rest of humankind. These courses testify to the varying ways in which people think, form values, confront ambiguity, express spiritual and aesthetic yearnings, and grapple with moral and ethical problems. By analyzing and interpreting literary, philosophical, religious, or artistic works, students examine the foundations of human experience. By producing original artistic works in imaginative writing, studio art, theatre, film, music, and dance, students have the opportunity to connect the universal sources of human inspiration with their own creative processes.

### **b. International Cultures (3 courses)**

The study of international culture provides students with a basis for understanding the diversity of experiences and values in our contemporary, global society. Options in this category include not only international history and

cultural studies courses, but also courses in literature, film studies, the social sciences, art, music, and languages.

Students may satisfy this requirement by choosing courses that focus on the history and culture of a single society or time period in human history and/or that represent a broad spectrum of different human societies and time periods. A semester or summer study abroad experience in a Vanderbilt-sponsored program or a pre-approved non-Vanderbilt sponsored program will count as one course in this area.

Language courses introduce students to the language of a different culture and provide insight into that culture in ways that are not possible to achieve through detached study. At intermediate and advanced levels, students are able to explore the culture in depth, using the language itself to read, discuss, and write about its various aspects. This level of mastery prepares the student for the option of Study Abroad, which the College of Arts and Science strongly recommends. Even at the most basic level, exposure to the language of a different culture prepares students to think and act in terms of living in a global community.

One of the three courses presented in fulfillment of this category must be an approved second semester language acquisition class taught at Vanderbilt University, unless (a) the student successfully completes any higher level class taught in a language other than English at Vanderbilt University, or (b) the student successfully demonstrates proficiency in a language other than English at or above the level achieved by approved second semester language acquisition classes taught at Vanderbilt University. All students must complete three courses in this category, irrespective of previous language study or proficiency in a language other than English.

The International Cultures requirement must be satisfied by the successful completion of courses corresponding to the appropriate academic placement for each student. The first semester of an introductory language acquisition class in the language a student presents as a condition for admission to the University, or in which a student transfers credit from another institution, cannot be used in partial fulfillment of this requirement.

### **c. History and Culture of the United States (1 course)**

The study of the history and culture of the United States provides students with a basis for understanding the American experience and the shaping of American values and viewpoints within the context of an increasingly global society. Interpreting history and culture in the broadest sense, options in this category include traditional history and cultural studies courses, but also courses in literature, film studies, the social sciences, art, and music, which illuminate historical periods or cultural themes in United States history. Students may

satisfy this requirement by choosing a course that focuses on the history and culture of a single social group or time period in American history and/or that represents a broad spectrum of different social groups and time periods.

**d. Mathematics and Natural Sciences** (3 courses, one of which must be a laboratory science course)

Courses in mathematics emphasize quantitative reasoning and prepare students to describe, manipulate, and evaluate complex or abstract ideas or arguments with precision. Skills in mathematical and quantitative reasoning provide essential foundations for the study of natural and social sciences. Students are generally introduced to mathematical reasoning through the study of introductory courses in calculus or probability and statistics.

Courses in the natural sciences engage students in hypothesis-driven quantitative reasoning that enables natural phenomena to be explained, the roles of testing and replication of experimental results, and the processes through which scientific hypotheses and theories are developed, modified, or abandoned in the face of more complete evidence, or integrated into more general conceptual structures. Laboratory science courses engage students in methods of experimental testing of hypotheses and analysis of data that are the hallmarks of the natural sciences. Natural science courses prepare students to understand the complex interactions between science, technology, and society; teach students to apply scientific principles to everyday experience; and develop the capacity to distinguish between science and what masquerades as science.

The Mathematics and Natural Sciences requirement must be satisfied by the successful completion of courses corresponding to the appropriate academic placement for each student. Students who have received a score of 4 or 5 on either Calculus AP test or a score of 6 or 7 on the corresponding IB exam—or who have completed or transferred credit from another institution for any Department of Mathematics course equivalent to a Vanderbilt University Mathematics course numbered 140 or above—may not satisfy the Mathematics and Natural Science requirement by completing either Math 127ab or Math 133, and may not receive academic credit for these courses, without approval from the Department of Mathematics.

Laboratory science courses may consist of single 3, 4, or 5 credit hour courses that include a laboratory component, or coupled courses in which the lecture and laboratory components are listed as separate courses. In the latter instances, both the lecture and laboratory courses must be completed to fulfill the laboratory science requirement.

**e. Social and Behavioral Sciences (2 courses)**

Social scientists endeavor to study human behavior at the levels of individuals, their interactions with others, their societal structures, and their social institutions. The remarkable scope represented by these disciplines extends from studying the underpinnings of brain function to the dynamics of human social groups to the structures of political and economic institutions. The methods employed by social scientists are correspondingly broad, involving approaches as varied as mapping brain activity, discovering and charting ancient cultures, identifying the societal forces that shape individual and group behavior, and using mathematics to understand economic phenomena. By studying how humans and societies function, students will learn about individual and societal diversity, growth, and change.

**f. Perspectives (1 course)**

Courses in Perspectives give significant attention to individual and cultural diversity, multicultural interactions, sexual orientation, gender, racial, ethical, religious, and "Science and Society" issues within a culture across time or between cultures, thereby extending the principles and methods associated with the liberal arts to the broader circumstances in which students live. These courses emphasize the relationship of divergent ethics and moral values on contemporary social issues and global conflicts.