



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY  
College of Arts *and* Science

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR CORE CURRICULUM & PRE-MAJOR ADVISING

Your guide to AXLE and CASPAR

2024-2025



Welcome to the College of Arts and Science!

You are about to embark on an exciting journey of exploration and discovery that will prepare you to be an engaged, active citizen able to tackle some of the most complex challenges facing our world.

The undergraduate experience at A&S is exactly what college should be: an intellectual environment where you can explore everything you're curious about, interested in, and fascinated by—at the heart of a top-tier university in one of the world's most exciting cities.

With more than 70 areas of study, you'll have countless chances to develop deep knowledge and expertise plus expose yourself to different fields and modes of inquiry. You'll have access to faculty scholars who not only are experts in their field, but who also value mentorship and helping you succeed on your path.

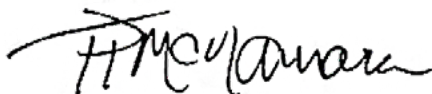
At A&S, we believe education should be rooted in curiosity, passion, and possibility. We encourage you to explore all that you find fascinating, embrace discomfort, be open to changing your mind, and chart your own path. Seek out differences, refuse to see boundaries, and make unexpected connections across disciplines, perspectives, and ideas.

We're so glad you've decided to join us. We are a school of explorers, and we are excited to start this journey with you.

Because when art + science come together, anything is possible.



**WHEN ART + SCIENCE  
COME TOGETHER,  
ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.**



**Timothy P. McNamara**  
Ginny and Conner Searcy Dean  
College of Arts and Science

## WHAT IS AXLE?

The unique AXLE curriculum is at the heart of the [College of Arts and Science](#) experience. Through [AXLE \(Achieving eXcellence in Liberal Education\)](#), you'll explore both the breadth and depth of the liberal arts and sciences. You'll encounter new subjects, learn to make connections across disciplines, and develop fundamental, life-long skills that will prepare you to succeed in today's increasingly global and interconnected world.

Your AXLE courses will fulfill approximately one-third of your graduation requirements at Vanderbilt. The rest of your studies will consist of courses to fulfill [your major](#) (roughly one-third) and electives (roughly one-third).

## AXLE OVERVIEW

You'll satisfy the AXLE requirement by completing the following coursework:

### Liberal Arts (13 courses)

- Humanities and the Creative Arts (3 courses)
- International Cultures (3 courses)
- Mathematics and Natural Sciences (3 courses)
- Social and Behavioral Sciences (2 courses)
- History and Culture of the United States (1 course)
- Perspectives (1 course)

### TO MEET THE LIBERAL ARTS REQUIREMENT

YOU MUST TAKE:

**13 COURSES**

from at least **7 DEPARTMENTS**

in these **6 CATEGORIES**

### Writing (3-4 courses)

- English composition (1 course)
- First-Year Writing Seminar\* (1 course)
- One writing (W) course\*
- An additional writing (W) course or Oral Communication course\*

\*Also counts toward the Liberal Arts requirement

# THE LIBERAL ARTS REQUIREMENT

AXLE's [liberal arts requirement](#) will introduce you to multiple subject areas, giving you a broad understanding of many topics and the chance to develop a range of skills that will equip you to succeed in our constantly changing world. To fulfill the liberal arts requirement, you must take 13 courses from at least 7 different departments, across the 6 categories described below.

## HUMANITIES AND CREATIVE ARTS

### 3 courses

Courses in the humanities and the creative arts will challenge you to examine your personal understanding of life and how your individual experiences overlap with those of the rest of humankind. These courses explore how people think, form values, confront ambiguity, express spiritual and creative yearnings, and grapple with moral and ethical problems.

## INTERNATIONAL CULTURES

### 3 courses + foreign language proficiency

The study of international cultures and foreign languages will prepare you to navigate our increasingly interconnected, global society. Courses include international history and cultural studies, literature, film studies, the social sciences, art, music, and languages.

Of the three courses in this category, at least one must be a second-semester or higher language-acquisition class taught at Vanderbilt, unless you can [demonstrate similar proficiency through testing](#). If you demonstrate proficiency through testing, you must still complete three approved INT courses to satisfy the international cultures requirement.

The first semester of an introductory language class taught at Vanderbilt does not count toward the foreign language proficiency requirement. Intensive elementary language courses that cover two semesters' content in one semester count as one course toward this requirement.

## FOREIGN LANGUAGE PLACEMENT

Students may submit language proficiency scores from the following tests:

- AP or IB test
- Tennessee Language Center Proficiency test

MINIMUM REQUIRED TEST SCORES VARY BY DEPARTMENT.  
PLEASE CHECK THE [CASPAR WEBSITE](#) FOR DETAILS.

You may satisfy one international cultures course requirement by completing a pre-approved study-abroad program of at least six weeks' duration. Please check with your CASPAR adviser or the [Global Education Office \(GEO\)](#) for a list of approved programs.

## ■ MATHEMATICS AND NATURAL SCIENCES (MNS) 3 courses, including 1 with a lab

Mathematics courses will train you to interact in a precise way with complex or abstract ideas. Natural science courses will help you understand the complex interactions between science, technology, and society; apply scientific principles to everyday experience; and develop the ability to distinguish between science and what masquerades as science.

As part of the three required courses in this category, you must include a natural science lecture and lab combination.

## ■ SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES (SBS) 2 courses

This requirement teaches students how humans and societies function, including studying 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 and the structures of political and economic institutions.

## ■ HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE UNITED STATES (US) 1 course

This category provides students with a foundational understanding of 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, plus literature, film, social science, art, and music courses that illuminate historical periods or cultural themes in U.S. history.

## ■ PERSPECTIVES (P) 1 course

The perspectives requirement prepares students to serve as compassionate leaders, effective problem-solvers, and productive citizens in a diverse world. Courses in this category give significant attention to individual and cultural diversity; multicultural interactions; sexual orientation; and gender, racial, ethical, and religious issues within or between cultures.

# THE WRITING REQUIREMENT

The [AXLE writing requirement](#) will introduce you to core elements of a liberal arts education: curiosity, independent thought, critical inquiry, and respectful collaboration and discussion. The courses in this sequence will also teach you to communicate clearly and persuasively, plus familiarize you with the conventions of academic writing.

## English Composition

Strong writing skills are essential for you to succeed, both at Vanderbilt and beyond. Effective written communication will serve you in any career path you choose, helping you to communicate your thoughts in a thoughtful, organized, and convincing manner.

To satisfy this requirement, you must start by demonstrating competency in English composition, either by completing English 1100 in your first semester or by scoring appropriately on an approved placement test.

First-Year Writing Seminar

### QUALIFYING PLACEMENT TEST SCORES

- SAT score of at least 660 on the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section of the digital SAT
- ACT score of at least 27 on the English portion, combined with a minimum score of 19 on the Writing portion; or an overall score of at least 30 on the English portion
- AP score of at least 4 on the English Language or English Literature exam
- IB score of at least 6 on the higher-level English A exam
- Transfer credit\* for English 1100, 1210W, 1220W, 1230W, 1250W, 1260W, 1270W, or 1300W

\*Transfer credit may be used to satisfy the first W course requirement, but not the second.

The First-Year Writing Seminar is an intimate, interactive course where you will be encouraged to participate actively in class discussions. You will learn to approach writing as a process, in which feedback and revisions are as welcome and important as creativity. By participating in challenging levels of dialogue, research, and writing, you will learn to:

- Brainstorm new ideas
- Do the research to support those ideas; and
- Craft written assignments that present and support your arguments in a coherent way.

A&S offers numerous First-Year Writing Seminars across many departments and topics. First-Year Writing Seminars also count toward the Liberal Arts requirement for the relevant category. For example, a First-Year Writing Seminar offered by the Department of Physics may also count toward the Mathematics and Natural Sciences requirement. All First-Year Writing Seminars are numbered 1111 in the course catalog

## PREVIOUS FIRST-YEAR WRITING SEMINARS HAVE INCLUDED:

SUSTAINABLE FASHION: ISSUES, PRACTICES, AND POSSIBILITIES

FREAKONOMICS RENAISSANCE ART AND POLITICS

STRESS, HEALTH & BEHAVIOR

ETHNOGRAPHY OF CLIMATE

PSEUDOARCHAEOLOGY: MYSTERIES AND MYTHS IN POPULAR CULTURE

## Additional Writing Requirements

You must complete two additional courses to satisfy the Writing requirement.

You must have a W course completed by the end of your fourth semester at Vanderbilt. An additional W course (or an approved Oral Communication course) must be completed before graduation. Through these courses, you will receive regular writing assignments and feedback to help hone the writing skills most appropriate to your chosen major.

You may take an approved Oral Communication course in place of your second W course. Oral Communication courses will help you develop public speaking skills and train you for public discourse and reasoned argument.

W courses and approved Oral Communication courses also count toward the Liberal Arts requirement for the relevant category. For example, a W course offered by the Department of Economics may also count toward the Social and Behavioral Sciences category.

## WHAT IS CASPAR?

The [College of Arts and Science Pre-Major Academic Resource Center \(CASPAR\)](#) is unique to Arts and Science and will help you lay the groundwork for academic success. Through CASPAR, you will work with a dedicated adviser to develop a course of study that fits your academic and professional goals.

Vanderbilt also provides [pre-professional advising](#) for students who intend to pursue a career in medicine, law, or architecture. If you are interested in one of these fields, you should plan to contact the appropriate pre-professional adviser early in your course of study. Please check with your CASPAR adviser for details.

## HOW YOUR CASPAR ADVISER CAN HELP

CASPAR advisers offer expert advice on academic matters and will help you acclimate to Vanderbilt academic life. Your adviser will help you:

- Create an academic plan that reflects your interests, strengths, and goals
- Navigate AXLE, the College of Arts and Science's core curriculum
- Understand academic policies and procedures
- Answer questions about AP credit and course placements
- Access available campus supports and resources
- Explore your intellectual interests, while still completing your academic requirements.

What CASPAR advisers don't do:

- Choose your classes for you
- Register you for classes
- Pick your major or major adviser
- Contact professors on your behalf
- Request changes to your grades
- Set academic policy for the university, college, or academic departments.



# SUMMER BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

You will hear from your CASPAR adviser the summer before you start at Vanderbilt and will work with your adviser until you declare a major. At that point, you will be paired with a faculty adviser from your major department.

Generally speaking, you should plan to meet with your CASPAR adviser at least once per semester to discuss your course selection for the following semester. However, we encourage you to meet with your CASPAR adviser as frequently as needed to ensure early academic success. The summer before you arrive, you will receive an email from your CASPAR adviser with information on how to sign up for your first advising appointment and how to release any holds on your account.

Please check the [CASPAR website](#) or [university calendar](#) for specific dates related to course registration and other key activities.