



UNDERSTANDING YOUR
CORE CURRICULUM
& PRE-MAJOR ADVISING



YOUR GUIDE TO AXLE & CASPAR



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE



Welcome to the College of Arts and Science!

You're about to embark on a journey of exploration and discovery that will prepare you to tackle society's biggest problems, find success in our rapidly changing economy, and make a positive impact on our world.

At the College of Arts and Science, our focus is not on preparing you for a specific career, but on teaching you "habits of the mind" that will prepare you for any career. You will leave here knowing how to think critically, communicate effectively, question analytically, and explore deeply. You will have the fundamental knowledge to excel in a range of professions—knowledge that employers are consistently seeking in their workforce.

That is because the liberal arts are the foundational disciplines of human thought, disciplines that underpin every other area of inquiry. They include the Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences: fields such as English and Philosophy, Art and Theatre, Economics and Anthropology, Chemistry and Physics.

You'll study these subjects in an interdisciplinary environment that trains you to forge connections across specializations and with other people. With 35 academic departments and programs, and more than 60 majors and minors, we are Vanderbilt's most academically diverse school. And with a strong commitment to diversity—of thought, race, gender, geography, experience, and socioeconomic background—we offer an environment where you can learn as much from your fellow students as from your professors.

I'm so glad you've decided to join us in the College of Arts and Science. We are a school of explorers, and we are excited to start this journey with you.



John Geer

Ginny and Conner Searcy Dean of the College of Arts and Science
Professor of Political Science

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AXLE

THE ARTS & SCIENCE CORE CURRICULUM

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 (HCA)

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 (INT)

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.

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.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE FAQ

- SAT II, AP, AND IB SUBJECT TESTS CAN BE USED TO DEMONSTRATE PROFICIENCY OR AS PREREQUISITES TO TAKE HIGHER-LEVEL LANGUAGE COURSES
- THE TENNESSEE LANGUAGE CENTER TEST CAN BE USED TO DEMONSTRATE PROFICIENCY IN A LANGUAGE IN WHICH YOU DO NOT HAVE A STANDARDIZED TEST SCORE

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

■ 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, one must include a lecture and a lab combination. The exact courses you take will depend on your background, test scores, planned major/career, and other factors. Please check with your CASPAR adviser for advice on choosing the appropriate courses.

■ 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.

QUALIFYING PLACEMENT TEST SCORES

- **SAT score** of at least 660 on the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section, with a minimum score of 27 on the Reading section and 28 on the Writing and Language section
- **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 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.*

First-Year Writing Seminar

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.

RECENT FIRST-YEAR WRITING SEMINARS INCLUDE:

RACE, SPORTS, AND AMERICAN CULTURE

FREAKONOMICS CHEMISTRY IN NEUROPSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS
HUMAN VARIATION GENETICS

IMMIGRATION AND IDENTITY

ARTISTIC DREAMS, COMMUNITIES, AND PATHWAYS

...and more

Additional Writing Requirements

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

By the end of your fourth semester at Vanderbilt you must complete your first W course. You must complete an additional W course (or an approved Oral Communication course) 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.



CASPAR

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 incoming 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.

THE ADVISING TIMELINE

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.

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

Summer Prior to First Year:

- Receive your first email from CASPAR with instructions on how to sign up for your first advising session, set up your login for Vanderbilt's systems, and release any remaining holds on your account.
- Attend your first advising session.
- Register for fall courses.

First Year:

- Semester 1: Meet at least once with your CASPAR adviser to discuss course selection for the following semester
- Semester 2: Meet at least once with your CASPAR adviser to discuss course selection for the following semester.

Second Year:

- Semester 3: Meet at least once with your CASPAR adviser to discuss course selection for the following semester. This is also the first opportunity to declare your major (beginning in October).
- Semester 4: Meet at least once with your CASPAR adviser to discuss course selection for the following semester. This is the final opportunity to declare your major (ending in March).