A Major in Humanities

The Humanities Program offers highly motivated students the opportunity to design their own course of study as a major for the B.A. degree. Each applicant to the program consults with the Humanities advisor to create a flexible and self-mapped major consisting of forty-two credit hours beyond The University's basic education requirements.

Students blend a range of courses and disciplines connected by a single theme, going beyond the traditional disciplines associated with the Humanities. Each course in the “contract” - the individual program of study - must clearly contribute to a coherent major with a focus on a particular theme, idea, or question. That interdisciplinary subject may be as specific as Humanitarian Aid in Central Asia and Latin America, or as comprehensive as Literature, History, and Art.

Each unique major culminates in a two-semester honors thesis—the student designs a project, conducts in-depth research, and works closely with a faculty supervisor. On occasion the thesis may be an original creative work such as a documentary film, a collection of poems, or an art installment. Humanities seniors present their thesis findings at a conference for the academic community each semester.

One recent graduate drew from the collection of disciplines she most enjoys— Government, Women and Gender Studies, and Rhetoric —to form her unique major: “Human Rights and the Media.” For her thesis she compared NGO and newspaper coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis. In her analysis she found that the distinction between journalists and NGOs is blurring, as NGOs adopt common news frames for their reporting. Her project is just one example of the wide-ranging research that honors students perform in the Humanities Program.

What permits such comprehensive and diverse undergraduate research to happen? The answer is the program’s tight-knit, academically motivated community. In addition to in-depth research, students benefit from the program’s many other offerings: individualized advising, the Liberal Arts Honors commons room and computer lab, stipends for unpaid internships, and scholarships for research and study abroad.

Direct here to application information.