

Liberal Learning

Christopher G. Murphy, *Associate Provost for Curriculum and Liberal Learning*

The foundation of a TCNJ undergraduate education, Liberal Learning ensures that students have essential knowledge and skills in areas outside their specific major. Liberal Learning provides students with skills that employers want, helps them succeed in their major, teaches them how to be life-long learners, exposes them to new perspectives, and equips them to be educated citizens who can contribute to the community.

Liberal Learning has three, interdependent structural elements. The first sparks intellectual and scholarly growth characterized by students' increasing ability to pose intellectually challenging questions, confront significant problems, and apply focused rigor in seeking promising resolutions. This element ensures that learners gain habits of mind necessary to study and understand human knowledge and how it applies to complex problems. The second element enables students to relate beliefs, values, and intellectual habits to their civic role in society. Such vision requires deep understandings of ways race, ethnicity, and gender have shaped local and global communities. The third element fosters familiarity with essential knowledge about broad sectors of human inquiry. Such familiarity enables students to approach questions, issues, and problems from a variety of perspectives and with a variety of intellectual tools.

I. Intellectual and Scholarly Growth

All first-year TCNJ students participate in the Summer Reading Program, reading a common book over the summer before their first semester. The book chosen each year explores timely issues important to students and society and connects to the year's campus-wide Intellectual Theme. On Convocation Day at the start of the first semester, students meet with a facilitator and their classmates from the First-Year Seminar (FYS) to discuss the book. This discussion introduces students to scholarly approaches to analyzing text sources.

All first-year TCNJ students take a seminar introducing them to serious scholarship and the life of the mind. The First-Year Seminar enables them to develop fundamental dispositions and abilities to engage in academic inquiry. Course sections are based on themes selected by each professor and designed to be intellectually stimulating and inclusive of students across all programs. Professors serve as mentors, assisting students in thinking about college and life. A student's First Seminar cannot fulfill major requirements.

A student's ability to demonstrate a well-developed, confident identity as a good writer is accomplished through completion of four requirements: 1) First-Year Writing (FYW) 102/Academic Writing, 2) the FYS, 3) a second- or third-year writing-intensive course in the major or in Liberal Learning or a writing-enriched curriculum in the major; and 4) a capstone or other fourth-year writing-intensive course in the major. However, students may be exempted from FYW 102 if they meet certain criteria, which are delineated in the section of this Bulletin titled "Writing Program."

Achieving speaking proficiency is measured by a student's ability to demonstrate a well-developed, confident identity as a good speaker and is the responsibility of each major program.

A level of second language proficiency enabling students to access perspectives and information from communities other than their own is met by completing the third introductory second-language course—or testing out of it. Proficiency at the third-semester level in a second language is required for all programs in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and in selected

Liberal Learning-2

Undergraduate Bulletin 2021-2022

programs in the School of the Arts and Communication and the School of Business. Proficiency at either the second- or third-semester level (depending on program) is required in the School of Science. Consult an advisor for information about specific program requirements.

Information literacy is measured by a student's ability to determine the need for, and to gain access to, information, as well as to develop the means of evaluating and using it proficiently and ethically. It is accomplished through an on-line, non-credit course (IDS 102) . Students must demonstrate this proficiency prior to graduation, but are encouraged to do so as early as possible.

II. Civic Responsibilities

Students should have an understanding of the nature of race and ethnicity, gender, and global communities, and the impact of each on our lives in the contemporary world. Also, students should seek to sustain and advance the communities in which they live by engaging in an informed and academically based service experience. The fulfillment of these goals is achieved by completing designated major or Liberal Learning courses or through an approved program or equivalent sustained experiences. No single course, program, or sustained experience may satisfy more than two of the four civic responsibility categories. A list of courses meeting the civic responsibilities requirement can be found online at the [Liberal Learning website](#).

The four areas of civic responsibility are:

- understanding the nature of race and ethnicity
- understanding the nature and impact of gender
- achieving global awareness
- community-engaged learning

III. Broad Sectors of Human Inquiry—Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and History, Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning:

This element of Liberal Learning develops students' abilities to understand and advance their knowledge in three broad sectors of human inquiry: Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and History, and Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning. Each of the three *broad sectors* of human inquiry is sub-divided into two *domains* as follows:

Arts and Humanities

- Literary, Visual and Performing Arts
- World Views and Ways of Knowing

Social Sciences and History

- Behavioral, Social or Cultural Perspectives
- Social Change in Historical Perspective

Natural Science and Quantitative Reasoning

- Natural Science
- Quantitative Reasoning

Courses taken for major or minor requirements may be used to fulfill the broad sector requirements as appropriate, and courses taken to meet the broad sectors of human inquiry requirements may also fulfill civic responsibilities requirements, as indicated in PAWS.

There are five ways whereby students can meet the Liberal Learning breadth requirement:

- **Menu option**
Students complete a total of eight courses: one course in each domain and two additional courses from different broad sectors. First Year Seminar sections do **not** fulfill any of the six domains, and therefore, do **not** fulfill any breadth requirement (although they may satisfy a Civic Responsibility). In satisfying their Natural Science requirement students must take at least one laboratory course. When two Natural Science courses are taken, they may be in one or two disciplines (unless otherwise specified by major requirements).
- **Interdisciplinary Concentrations**
These concentrations consist of six to eight courses addressing a common theme. Courses comprising a concentration must include at least two of the three broad sectors of human inquiry, with no more than four courses from the same broad sector. When an interdisciplinary concentration does not include two courses from each broad sector, additional courses, as necessary, from the appropriate sectors must be completed. Every student must also complete at least one course each in quantitative reasoning and natural science with laboratory. When two additional courses are required from the same sector, students must select courses with different prefixes.

The concentrations listed below are currently available. Complete descriptions for each can be found in the section of this Bulletin for “College-Wide Programs: Interdisciplinary Concentrations” as well as on the webpage on [Interdisciplinary Concentrations](#).

African Studies
 African Diaspora Studies
 African American Studies
 Asian Studies
 Caribbean Studies
 Classical and Early Modern
 British Literary Studies
 Classical Studies
 Cognitive Science
 European Literary Studies
 Health Communication
 International Political Economy Law and Society
 Religious Studies Social Justice
 Society, Ethics, and Technology

To enroll in an Interdisciplinary Concentration, consult with a faculty sponsor of the concentration, who will explain its academic focus and requirements and, with the student, determine its compatibility with the student’s major program and other academic goals.

Two courses can be counted between an Interdisciplinary Concentration and a Major, and one course can be counted between an Interdisciplinary Concentration and a Minor.

Students intending to complete an interdisciplinary concentration must obtain signatures from their major advisor(s) and one of the faculty sponsors of the concentration on the Interdisciplinary Concentration Form. The completed and signed form must be submitted to the Office of Records and Registration.

■ Double major

A double major has a first major and an optional second major. Double majors qualify students for reduced requirements for Liberal Learning under the Broad Sectors of Human Inquiry if, between the majors, there are two or more courses from at least two of the sectors (Arts and Humanities, Social Science and History, and Natural Science and Quantitative Reasoning). Courses from the major(s) in the same sector may have the same prefix. If only two sectors are represented, students must then take two additional courses from the missing sector. Except for Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning, where students must complete a laboratory science course and a course in quantitative reasoning whether or not the sector is included in one of the majors, it is not necessary to cover both domains in each sector. When additional courses in a sector not covered in one of the majors are required, each course must have a different prefix. Similarly, if a student needs only one additional course from a sector, its prefix must be different from the course taken for the major.

■ Dual major

Dual majors are formed when at least one program must be attached to the other to be viable. All secondary education programs and The Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education, Education of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, Special Education, and Urban Education sequences fall into this category. Dual majors fulfill the liberal learning requirements of the first major. The liberal arts or science content discipline is considered the first major for all secondary education sequences, and students in secondary education programs must complete liberal learning requirements in the same manner as those in the disciplinary major alone, except that in B.S. programs, students studying a foreign language not previously taken in high school need only complete it to the 102 level. The Education major is considered the first major for Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education, Education of the Deaf and Hard- of-Hearing, Special Education, and Urban Education sequences. Liberal learning requirements for these Education programs follow those outlined above for double majors, and, except for programs attached to Spanish, do not include a foreign language.

Some education majors must take specific Liberal Learning courses that are required by state licensure requirements. Please consult your major advisor for guidance on your Liberal Learning requirements.

■ Self-designed major or interdisciplinary concentration

Students can create their own majors or interdisciplinary concentrations. If the self-designed major is the student's only major, then the Liberal Learning requirements follow those of the Menu option; if the self-designed major is a student's second

Liberal Learning-5**Undergraduate Bulletin 2021-2022**

major, then the Liberal Learning requirements follow those of the double major option. Self-designed interdisciplinary concentrations follow the Liberal Learning requirements of the Interdisciplinary Concentration option.

To self-design a major, a student must secure the sponsorship of at least one faculty member as an advisor. The student must then submit a formal proposal and plan of studies to the Self-Designed Major Coordinator, Dr. Richard Kamber, at rkamber@tcnj.edu, who will meet with the student to work out the details of the proposal. For further information on self-designed majors, see the section of this Bulletin titled “Self-Designed Major”.

To self-design an interdisciplinary concentration, a student must secure the sponsorship of at least two faculty members who teach in disciplines included in the proposed concentration. The student must then complete the Interdisciplinary Concentration Form and submit it to the Office of Records and Registration.