

EXPLORING THE BATES LIBERAL ARTS CURRICULUM AND THE GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS



What is the Liberal Arts Tradition?

The liberal arts are concerned with the intellectual and ethical dimensions of personal growth. The college seeks students who will fully engage in this enterprise: excited by ideas, artistic expression, and challenging conversations, and eager to undertake the hard work that is the price of discovery. Each student must cultivate their own robust habits of mind; the college develops, encourages, and directs that process.

A Bates liberal arts education aspires to be truly transformational. Students are challenged to think judiciously and argue honestly, engage with ideas and individuals respectfully, develop the confidence to change their mind: to grow. They should demonstrate moral awareness, developing a sense of personal integrity and civic responsibility.

The Bates liberal arts tradition is expansive, prizing a wide range of voices and seeking new perspectives on both longstanding and emerging questions. The college embraces new knowledge and analytical approaches through a dynamic curriculum. New fields of scholarship are introduced by the faculty, and the most recent advances in technology and pedagogy are incorporated into each field of study. Bates promotes the development of critical thinking and writing skills throughout the curriculum, from the first-year seminar program to rigorous senior capstone work. The college encourages students to pursue their own original research as an extension of their course work and offers opportunities to do so. Recognizing the essential role that the liberal arts play in the development of social responsibility and good citizenship, the college encourages students to study abroad and to integrate community-engaged learning and research into their academic work.

What are the General Education Requirements at Bates for the Classes of 2023 and Beyond?

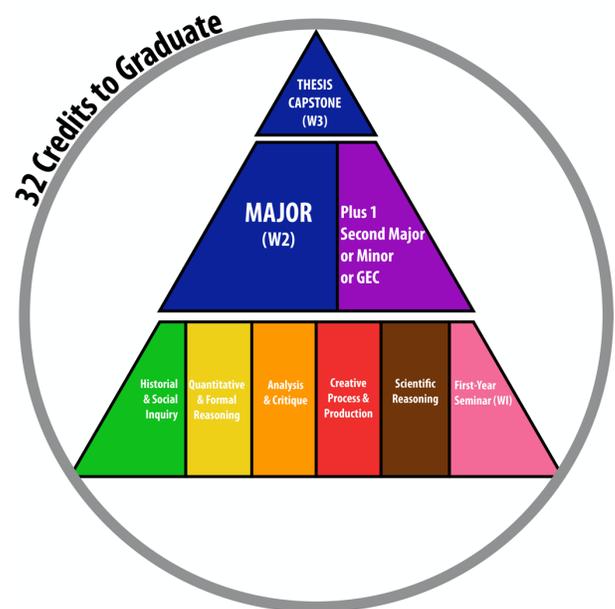
At Bates, degree requirements including completion of 32 credits and within that minimum of 32 credits students must complete the following:

- 5 “Modes of Inquiry (MOI)” Courses
- Major plus 1 more area of academic focus
- 3 “W” Courses

Each component is explained in more detail below.

What are the Modes of Inquiry (MOI) Courses and Why Should They Be Completed?

Modes of inquiry refer to how people identify and explore questions of interest. They are the systems and methods by which humans create, construe, and convey information. While there are more that could be enumerated, the Bates general education program emphasizes exposure to 5 Modes of Inquiry:



- *Analysis and Critique* [AC]: This mode examines cultural products and processes to consider how and why meaning is created and contested, arguments are constructed, art is produced, and values are established.
- *Creative Process and Production* [CP]: This mode provides the skills requisite for the creation and production process and ways to express, test, and/or give form to ideas.
- *Historical and Social Inquiry* [HS]: This mode of inquiry explores the history and complexity of the individual, human societies, and social interaction, from the intimate to the global, across time and space.
- *Scientific Reasoning* [SR]: Scientific reasoning is an iterative process that uses empirical observations to develop and test theories about the natural world.
- *Quantitative and Formal Reasoning* [QF]: Quantitative reasoning is the application of basic mathematics and statistics to interpret data, draw conclusions, and solve real-world problems. Formal reasoning involves constructing and evaluating arguments or algorithms according to a set of established principles in a variety of contexts.

Most courses are tagged as fulfilling at least one MOI. Some courses are tagged as fulfilling two MOIs. Importantly, if a student takes a course tagged with two MOIs, the course counts for only one (this is referred to at Bates as no double-dipping). For example, if a student takes a course tagged as both HS and AC, and they take another course tagged as HS. The former will count only as fulfilling the AC requirement and the latter will count as completing the HS requirement.

As the visual presentation of the Bates general education program suggests, the MOIs can be thought of as both a foundation for academic exploration as well as a vehicle for that exploration. As a foundation, the MOIs ensures that a Bates student is exposed to a wide breadth of diverse approaches to how questions are asked and how information is gathered, assessed, and shared. Additionally, the MOIs can help students explore the wide array of course offerings, helping them to explore many areas of the curriculum prior to major declaration. While a student need not complete each of the 5 MOI requirements prior to major declaration by March of their Sophomore Year, doing so may assist a student in determining what fields of study might become their primary areas of focus. Consequently, it is suggested that students complete the requirement prior to the junior year.

Additionally, while students can take up to 2 courses pass/fail (not for a letter grade) at Bates, all MOI requirements must be taken for a letter grade.

Some courses at Bates count for .5 credits. Others count for 1 credit. All MOIs must be completed through 1 credit. So, if a student takes a .5 class (for example, a short term course or a dance or music performance course) that is tagged as an MOI, they have not completed the requirement. They would need to take an additional .5 credit in the MOI to complete the requirement.

Finally, MOIs can be completed outside of Bates. For example, if a student studies during the summer at another institution or studies away from Bates during the academic year, e.g., study abroad), courses taken can be considered to fulfill MOI requirements if they are determined to be directly equivalent to a Bates course that is already tagged with a Mode designation. That determination is made during the process of transferring the formal credits to the Bates transcript, or when the student requests the appropriate Chair (in the case of the credit being relevant to a major or minor) or GEC coordinator (in the case of the credit being relevant to a GEC) to consider the suitability of the non-Bates course. If the Chair or GEC coordinator determines that the non-Bates course is a close match to an existing Bates course and

the credit is successfully applied to the student's Bates transcript, then the DegreeAudit record will be updated to reflect that the student has satisfied the Mode of Inquiry associated with the Bates version of the course.

For more information on the MOIs, please see <https://www.bates.edu/registrar/academic-information/general-education/faqs-for-students-about-the-mois/>

What is the Major Plus One Requirement and Why Do Students Complete It?

A holistic liberal arts education values both breadth of knowledge as well as depth or focus of study in a particular set of areas. To that end, students are required to declare a major focus of study no later than March of their sophomore year. While the faculty believes that each student should be essentially familiar with many fields of liberal learning, it also believes that a student must choose a field of special concentration — a major — to gain the advantages that come from studying one academic subject more extensively. This major field occupies a significant percentage of the student's college work and may be related to an intended career following graduation.

Students may declare one or two majors. Completion of more than one major requires fulfillment of all major requirements, including the thesis, senior project, and/or the comprehensive examination, in each academic department or program. Students who seek to declare three majors must obtain permission of the chair of each of the departments or programs in which they plan to major as well as permission of the Committee on Academic Standing prior to declaration of the third major. Bates offers an array of majors in disciplines and interdisciplinary areas as well as permits students to create their own independent majors. More information on the majors can be accessed at <https://www.bates.edu/catalog/?s=current&a=renderStatic&c=academic#majorfieldsofstudy>

The Plus One refers to a second area of academic focus. Students have three options to complete this requirement: a second major, a minor, or a General Education Concentration.

A Minor: In addition to completing a major, a student may elect to complete a minor in a number of disciplines. Minor requirements vary and are detailed in the introductions to the [courses of instruction](#) of the relevant departments or programs in this catalog. Minors are offered in [Africana](#); [anthropology](#); [Asian studies](#); [chemistry](#); [Chinese](#); [dance](#); earth and climate sciences; [educational studies](#); [French and Francophone studies](#); [gender and sexuality studies](#); [German](#); [Greek](#); Hispanic studies; [history](#); [Japanese](#); [Latin](#); [mathematics](#); [music](#); [philosophy](#); [physics](#); [religious studies](#); [rhetoric, film, and screen studies](#); [Russian](#); [teacher education](#); and [theater](#).

A General Education Concentration or GEC: General Education Concentrations or GECs challenge students to develop significant expertise outside their major, but they require less coursework than both the major or minor. Each GEC consists of four courses chosen from a faculty-designed menu that is structured on the basis of a clearly articulated organizing principle.

Most GECs are transdisciplinary meaning that they organize courses from distinct disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas of study around a particular topic, problem, or theme so that a single concept can be explored deliberately from a variety of perspectives. For example, the GEC in Public Health brings together courses in biology, chemistry, philosophy, sociology, and gender and sexual studies to explore public and community health from interdisciplinary perspectives, looking at such issues as medical practice; public policy concerning health care; sociology of race, class, and gender; and cultural constructions of health and sickness. It aims to expose students to public health issues at global, national, and local levels. It may include community-engaged learning, courses from abroad, community-based research, and internships. Similarly, the GEC in Law & Society brings together courses in American

studies, Africana, economics, history, politics, psychology, religious studies, sociology to examine how the "law" is embodied in its text, institutions, function, and outcomes and how law shapes and is shaped by the culture and society in which it exists.

Some GECs, by contrast, are focused in a single area of study and might be thought of as a mini-minor. Whereas a minor might consist of 6 or 7 courses in a particular area, a GEC in that same area might consist of only 4. For example, single-subject GECs are offered in chemistry, Chinese language, Dance, Digital and Computational Studies, English, the Geosphere, and Philosophy. Importantly, if students take these GECs they cannot also enroll in the majors or minors in these areas.

Some concentrations may include relevant co-curricular experiences such as significant community service, orchestra, theatrical performance, or volunteer work.

Finally, GECs, just like a student's major and minor, appear on their transcript. For more on the over 70 GECs available to Bates students, please see <https://www.bates.edu/catalog/?s=current&a=renderDept&d=GEC>

What are the 3 “W” Courses and Why Do Students Take Them?

One of the goals of a liberal education in the arts and sciences is the development of a student's ability to convey ideas and information logically and clearly and to evaluate critically the ideas of others. This is a process that requires attention at increasingly more sophisticated levels throughout a student's academic career. The writing-attentive curriculum at Bates is designed to provide students with a solid footing in using writing as a means for communication, scholarship, intellectual discovery, and civic action. While writing and communication are woven throughout the Bates curriculum, writing receives explicit focus in a three-tiered writing requirement that must be completed at Bates over a student's four years. Each student must take at least 1 W1 course, at least 1 W2 course, and 1 W3. All W requirements—unlike the MOI requirements—must be taken at Bates. For more information see <https://www.bates.edu/dof/teaching-and-advising/writing-attentive-courses/>

W1. In most cases, the student's First-Year Seminar or FYS count as the W1 requirement as all FYS courses carry a W1 designation (some other courses may also be designated as a W1). Courses at the W1 level are focused on helping students to develop a useful process for writing, to transfer the writing skills with which they enter college to their studies at Bates, and to acquire a foundation of skills that they can then transfer to writing in subsequent courses. Guided by an advanced scholar with a deep history of using writing to persuade, argue, and educate within their field of study, students in W1 courses begin to explore the idea that criteria for writing vary across disciplines, genres, and communities. Students generally satisfy the W1 requirement with a First-Year Seminar, all sections of which carry the W1 designation. Other courses may carry the W1 designation as well.

Each first-year student takes a first-year seminar or FYS that is designated as a W1. This is a limited-enrollment course specifically designed for first-year students. Topics vary from year to year, but seminars represent a broad range of interdisciplinary issues and questions addressed within the tradition of the liberal arts. First-year seminars enable entering students to work with faculty and other students in a small class; they provide closely supervised training in techniques of reasoning, writing, and research; and they foster an attitude of active participation in the educational process. First-year seminars carry course credit toward the baccalaureate degree and are offered only in the fall semester. Again, all first-year seminars fulfill the first-level writing requirement [W1], and they may also fulfill other General Education, major, or minor requirements. Usually a student's first-year seminar instructor is also their academic advisor.

W2. In most cases, students will take a W2 course as a necessary part of the chosen major, but students can also take W2 courses outside of their major. Courses at the W2 level are focused on helping students to find their voice within their chosen field of study. Students in W2s learn about how knowledge and understanding are communicated in major disciplines or interdisciplinary programs. Under the mentorship of a member of the faculty they develop a comfort and familiarity with the way that scholars and professionals in the disciplines construct knowledge. W2 courses orient students to the unique and often idiosyncratic expectations for communication that exist within every academic discipline, preparing students to produce scholarship within their major.

W3. At the W3 level, students complete the thesis or capstone project that is the signature of a Bates education. In W3 courses, students work under the supervision of a member of the faculty to create a significant, original contribution to the scholarship within their chosen area(s) of study.

What Should a First-Year Student Consider When Registering for their First Fall Courses?

The general education program is important to think about when registering for courses. But, instead of thinking about this program, and especially the 5 MOIs, as required courses, think of them as a tool that can help you explore and identify your interests within the vast array of course offerings.

So, as an incoming first-year student, you should consider what you are interested in as your First-Year Seminar course. Then consider using some of the MOIs to help you identify other courses in which you might be interested. Try to spread your courses across the MOIs (rather than cluster many of them in a single MOI) so that you can get as much breadth and exploration into your semester. For example, if your FYS is tagged as Historical and Social Inquiry (HS), then consider taking a course in Scientific Reasoning (SR) and perhaps another in Creative Performance and Production (CP). Doing so will enable you to:

- 1) explore a wide range of topics and questions
- 2) gain exposure to a broad set of fields of study, in which you may want to major or minor
- 3) take a class in a field that is new to you
- 4) include courses that use different kinds of materials, e.g., articles, monographs, films, television, novels, poetry, dance, theater, music, paintings, etc.
- 5) take courses that engage with material in different ways, producing work ranging from written papers to oral presentations, collaborative creative performances with fellow students to solo productions, laboratory experiments to field work, community-engaged projects to purposeful work explorations.

Remember you do not need to complete all MOIs in your first year; it is recommended you complete them prior to the start of your junior year. And, you do not have to declare a major until the March of your sophomore year, so utilize your first year to explore the curriculum. If you are interested in particular fields, you can also access the *Recommended Entry Course* resource as one way to consider which courses are a good place to start. See <https://www.bates.edu/dof/recommended-entry-courses/>. And, if you are interested in a particular pathway such as a pre-health professions course of study, be sure to connect with your academic advisor for more information or see: <https://www.bates.edu/purposeful-work/pre-health-studies-advising-resources/>

Where is There More Information about the Academic Program at Bates?

For more information on the Bates curriculum and academic offerings, please see <https://www.bates.edu/catalog/?s=current&a=renderStatic&c=academic>. For more information specifically organized for incoming first-year students see <https://www.bates.edu/orientation/> and click on the tab, “Academics in the First Year.”