

LIBERAL STUDIES CORE CURRICULUM

Nazareth College of Rochester

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rationale for the Liberal Studies Core Curriculum	2
Goals, Objectives, and Criteria for Courses in the Liberal Studies Curriculum.....	3
Summary of Liberal Studies Course Criteria.....	4
Structure of the Liberal Studies Curriculum.....	5
Foundations.....	5
Perspectives.....	6
Connections.....	6
Sample Program for B.A. Degree	8
Sample Program for B.S. Degree.....	9
Writing Across the Curriculum: A Complement to the Nazareth College Liberal Studies Curriculum	10

RATIONALE FOR THE LIBERAL STUDIES CORE CURRICULUM

"The undergraduate curriculum at Nazareth College centers on the basic disciplines of the liberal arts, with a range and balance of courses in the humanities, the natural and social sciences, and the fine arts... The skills to be cultivated through this curriculum include skills of listening, thinking, writing, and speaking critically and analytically. Of equal or greater importance are the knowledge to be mastered, the ideas and issues to be evaluated, and the values to be explored."

Statement of Mission and Goals, 1985

The undergraduate curriculum at Nazareth College is founded upon a Core Curriculum in the Liberal Studies. This Liberal Studies Curriculum offers a common learning experience underlying all of the various programs of study at Nazareth. Through this Curriculum, students are introduced to critical thinking and communication of ideas within the major modes of inquiry exercised in the fine arts, history, literature, mathematics, philosophy, religious studies, natural sciences, and the social sciences.

These modes of inquiry have traditionally been an integral part of the overall curriculum at Nazareth because of their significance in the intellectual tradition. Each mode of inquiry is valuable in itself; each helps to form a context in which other modes can be understood; and each provides the student with an example of a distinctive way of asking questions and seeking answers. Students take courses in a variety of disciplines in which these modes of inquiry are practiced, thus ensuring the diversity necessary in a liberal education; the sequence of additional courses in areas selected by the student promotes depth of inquiry.

There can be no learning without the development of skills essential for effective oral, aural and written communication and critical thinking. Therefore, each course in the Liberal Studies Curriculum is structured so that these communication and reasoning skills are central to the student's experience of an individual mode of inquiry and to the integration of various modes. In fulfilling the Liberal Studies Curriculum, the Nazareth College undergraduate student not only gains knowledge and skills, but does so in a way which supports and enriches the rest of his or her college studies, and enables a lifetime of learning.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND CRITERIA FOR COURSES IN THE LIBERAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

Because the Liberal Studies Curriculum at Nazareth College is intended to help students develop skills, pursue truth from a variety and a depth of perspectives, and thus explore their responsibilities as individuals as well as members of the larger human community. Liberal Studies courses demonstrate--as nearly as possible--certain, specific criteria.

- A. Development of Skills. Liberal Studies courses directly address the student's development of intellectual skills that support life-long learning, skills such as critical thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation), problem-solving, interactive reading, and effective oral and written communication.

In order to achieve these skills students are provided, in small group settings, with opportunities for:

- 1) listening and reading carefully and perceptively
- 2) speaking and writing with clarity and precision
- 3) using writing as a mode of learning
- 4) analyzing and synthesizing information and knowledge
- 5) formulating rational arguments

- B. Content and Subject Matter. Liberal Studies courses introduce students to a discipline's distinctive subject matter and mode(s) of inquiry, emphasizing quality exposure to a way of thinking. This assumes that a variety of teaching methods (not only lecture but also discussions, oral reports, writing, role-playing, simulations, guest speakers, etc.) are used, and that, whenever possible, course syllabi are developed/revised in consultation with colleagues teaching Liberal Studies courses in related fields. First courses strive to foster in students an appreciation for multiple perspectives within a discipline; subsequent courses strive to enhance students' depth of inquiry in a discipline as well as their understanding of the interrelatedness of various liberal studies disciplines.

A carefully designed Liberal Studies course strives to:

- 1) use at least some primary texts/documents/empirical sources;
- 2) foster in students an appreciation for the past through a knowledge of historical context, as well as an awareness and understanding of cultural diversity in today's world;
- 3) spill over naturally into the unique cultural, both intellectual and artistic, opportunities at Nazareth College (e.g. film series, Arts Center programs, recitals, Distinguished Lecture Series, Lecture Committee offerings, Casa Italiana series);
- 4) enable students to compare how the arts and the sciences understand the world;
- 5) provide opportunities for students to explore the moral/ethical/aesthetic implications of human choice for themselves as individuals and for the larger human community.

Though every Liberal Studies Curriculum course does not meet every criterion, Liberal Studies courses are designed with all the criteria in mind and faculty teaching them implement these criteria as appropriate to the discipline.

The Liberal Studies Curriculum has as its ultimate goal enabling students to become enlightened and responsible participants in the human community--a goal well expressed by the recent report from the Carnegie Foundation on "Values--From Competence to Commitment:"

"The aim of the undergraduate experience is not only to prepare the young to be productive, but also to enable them to live with dignity and purpose; not only to generate new knowledge, but to channel that knowledge to humane ends; not merely to study government, but to shape a citizenry that can promote the public good."

College: The Undergraduate Experience in America, 1986
Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

SUMMARY OF LIBERAL STUDIES COURSE CRITERIA*

--develop students' skills in:

- listening, reading
- speaking, writing %
- higher order thinking

--immerse students in the modes of inquiry by:

- using primary sources
- exploring historical contexts
- appreciating cultural diversity #
- experiencing the arts
- probing the physical world
- examining ethical issues

* not every course can meet all the criteria

% some courses are designated "writing intensive"

each student elects at least one course which explores non-Western culture

STRUCTURE OF THE LIBERAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

At Nazareth College the Liberal Studies Curriculum is organized around the categories of Foundations, Perspectives, and Connections in the liberal arts and sciences. Foundations comprises courses that enhance skill development and that provide a common learning experience introducing students to the Liberal Studies Curriculum itself. Perspectives presents a wide variety of courses in liberal studies that promote diversity and depth in those studies. Connections links the unified presentation of the liberal studies in Freshman Seminar, and the integrating experience of senior projects, comprehensives or seminar courses in students' major fields.

FOUNDATIONS

Foundations courses include both the development of skills and the learning of specific content about liberal studies. Students are expected to achieve college-level competence in the areas of written expression and quantitative reasoning. Generally, students take six hours of Freshman English and three hours of Freshman Seminar. Six hours of Foreign Language at the intermediate levels are required for the B.A. degree and are strongly recommended for the B.S. degree. Placement of students in appropriate skill-building courses is determined through examination.

The established small group process of Freshman Seminar introduces students to the diversity and depth of the Liberal Studies Curriculum. This highly interactive seminar uses writing assignments, topical discussions, and student oral presentations to establish a rationale for the breadth and depth of Liberal Studies courses. It explores how the different disciplines ask and answer questions about their subject matters, thus comparing the different modes of inquiry. Finally, it provides some practical advice about making choices among available Liberal Studies courses.

The current Freshman Seminar format, "Spreading the News," integrates these goals and methodologies. The Freshman Seminar course has a formal speaking skills component with guidelines provided by Speech/Theatre faculty. Students who do not demonstrate proficiency in speech communication may be required to follow up with SPC 103 or 104 or TRA 215. The overall goal of this seminar is not solely the presentation of content, but modeling a question-defining and question-exploring process for students.

Although faculty are responsible for their own individual seminars, preparation to teach these seminars comes through the work of an inter-disciplinary faculty group whose professional development is supported by the College.

PERSPECTIVES

Perspectives embraces two sets of courses: the first (Perspectives I) promotes diversity, the second (Perspectives II) promotes development. In Perspectives I, students take courses designed according to Liberal Studies criteria in each of eight designated subject areas: fine arts, history, literature, mathematics, philosophy, religious studies, natural sciences and the social sciences. The natural science course includes a laboratory component.

Perspectives courses introduce students to the disciplines' distinctive contents and modes of inquiry by emphasizing quality exposure to ways of thinking rather than the breadth of material alone. For example, a Perspectives course in biology might study the human being as an evolved creature: while it primarily describes the human being empirically, it also appreciates humans from an ethical and aesthetic perspective. A Perspectives course in theatre history might consider representative scripts not so much for their own intrinsic value, but rather as products of their historical periods and for their intended audiences. Finally, a Perspectives course in psychology might explore the diverse theories, ways of knowing, and subject matters of behavioral science by examining philosophical roots and the impact of historical events on psychology's development.

For Perspectives II, students choose from among designated departmental and/or cross-disciplinary Liberal Studies course options. Departmental options include selected courses beyond the introductory level that enable students to deepen their knowledge in specific disciplinary areas outside the major. Students in the B.A. degree program select four courses at the Perspectives II level, distributed over four different subject areas outside the student's major area, and include a math or science course. Students in the B. S. degree program select three courses at the Perspectives II level, distributed over three subject areas outside of the student's major area.

Because understanding of a single object is rarely exhausted by one discipline, Perspectives II courses provide a further opportunity at a depth beyond the introductory level to examine a significant problem from multiple perspectives. Courses might focus on themes; for example, cultural traditions and social change; artistic forms and critical concepts; science, society and human values; and religious and philosophic approaches to knowing. Like the Freshman Seminar, preparing interested faculty to teach these courses is supported by the College when appropriate.

All students take one course which offers significant non-Western content. This course is selected from a listing of designated courses which includes both Perspectives courses as well as other courses.

CONNECTIONS

The Liberal Studies Curriculum establishes connections among disciplines and modes of knowing in liberal connections among studies by: first, introducing students to those modes in Freshman Seminar; next, by offering perspectives on various modes across the Liberal Studies Curriculum; and finally, by assisting seniors to look for coherent connections between their majors and the broader perspective of liberal studies.

Freshman Seminar presents some intrinsic differences and relationships among modes of inquiry in liberal studies. Student reflection, discussion, and writing on these ways of looking at the world begins the process by which students establish connections among the diverse courses they will take both in and out of the Liberal Studies Curriculum.

Seniors at Nazareth College demonstrate, through senior projects, departmental comprehensives, or seminars offered by their major departments, the connections they have established in their studies. This senior experience is designed to assess students' mastery of their major field and Liberal Studies Curriculum objectives, and to provide opportunities for students to integrate major and non-major studies.

Distribution of Credit Hours.

	<u>Required for B.A.</u>	<u>Strongly Recommended for B.S.</u>	<u>Required for B.S.</u>
Freshman English	6	6	6
Foreign Language	6	6	--
Freshman Seminar	3	3	3
Perspectives I	25	25	25
Perspectives II	<u>12</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>
Total	52	49	43

Note: Some students place out of the 6 credits in Freshman English.

Sample Program for B.A. Degree

FOUNDATIONS

----- Freshman ----3----	----- English ----3----
----- Frsh Sem ----3----	
----- Modern Foreign Lang. ----3----	----- -----3----- -----3-----

PERSPECTIVES

----- I -----	----- II -----
Mth ----3----	Mth
	or
----- Sci ----4----	----- Sci ----3----
----- Fine Arts ----3----	----- Fine Arts
----- His ----3----	
----- Lit ----3----	----- Lit ----3----
----- Phil ----3----	
----- Res ----3----	
----- Soc Sci ----3----	----- Soc Sci ----3----

15 credits + 25 credits + 12 credits = 52

Note: Four Perspectives II courses are selected from four different subject areas outside of a student's major area, and includes a math or science course.

Sample Program for B.S. Degree

FOUNDATIONS

PERSPECTIVES

----- Freshman ----3----	----- English ----3----	----- Mth ----3----	----- Sci ----4----
----- Frsh Sem ----3----		----- Sci ----4----	
----- Modern Foreign Lang. ----3----	----- ----3---- ----3----	----- Fine Arts	
		----- His ----3----	----- His ----3----
		----- Lit ----3----	----- Lit ----3----
		----- Phil ----3----	----- Phil ----3----
		----- Res ----3----	
		----- Soc Sci ----3----	----- Soc Sci ----3----

9 to 15 credits

+

25

+

9 = 43 to 49

Note: Three Perspectives II courses are selected from three different subject areas outside of a student's major area.
Foreign Language study is strongly recommended for B.S. programs.

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: A COMPLEMENT TO THE NAZARETH COLLEGE LIBERAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

The concept of Writing Across the Curriculum originates in British research which indicates that despite the obvious connection between language and learning, and despite the thoughtful dedication of most teachers to their students' learning, few are trained in using current research in communication theory, learning theory and writing theory to use these powerful connections between writing and learning effectively. Writing Across the Curriculum combines such research with contemporary learning theory and seeks a re-evaluation of the use faculty make of writing in their classrooms. The goals of this re-evaluation are to encourage the use of writing as a learning strategy and to increase the use of writing as a means of evaluating learning.

This program is implemented through a series of designated "writing intensive courses." These courses complement the emphasis on writing as an evaluative tool with an emphasis on writing as a tool for thinking, learning and self-exploration; thus, they consciously assert the ways that writing aids students in the insightful mastery of content. Because it uses the hand, eye and related musculature (is enactive) produces a text for subsequent review and analysis (is iconic) and uses language to represent experiences of books, notes and lectures (is symbolic), writing is itself a multiple mode of learning. The emphasis of writing intensive courses is not only on the quantity of writing that is produced, but on the quality of learning that these courses can facilitate.

MAKING THE CONCEPT WORK:

- 1) Faculty offering writing intensive courses are not teaching writing per se, but complementing and supporting content-area expertise with training in writing theory as it applies to assignment design, evaluating a written text, and in using both the assignment and the evaluation to facilitate learning.
- 2) Faculty are compensated for their training time.
- 3) Faculty are additionally provided with special support services, usually a student who is specially trained to work with other students on their writing problems with specific assignments; and the college writing laboratory offers not only diagnosis and remediation, but also on-going tutorial support to the student and ongoing pedagogical advice to the faculty member.
- 4) Writing intensive courses are restricted to a maximum enrollment of 25 students, and teachers meet in conference with students minimally twice during the term.
- 5) Faculty who teach writing intensive courses are normally granted a course-reduction (in consultation with the department chair) or some other specifically designated incentive in return for teaching three such courses over several semesters. Developing writing intensive courses or refining skills in courses that are already writing intensive by content and method become recognized dimensions of professional development.

As a part of the Liberal Studies Curriculum at Nazareth College, the Writing Across The Curriculum program includes five courses:

- English 101 and 102 or the equivalent
- one writing intensive Perspectives course at the introductory level, elected by the student from among those offered in various content areas
- a second writing intensive Perspectives course beyond the introductory level, elected by the student from among those offered in various content areas
- one course in the major as designated by the student's department.

DEMONSTRATING COMPETENCY

Students take a one-hour writing competency examination at the completion of their junior year; successful completion is a graduation requirement much like the comprehensive examination in the major. Failure to achieve competency requires that a student elect an appropriate writing course or initiate a tutorial program in the Writing Laboratory; and that s/he be re-examined for competency at the end of the following term and thereafter until competency is achieved. These examinations are evaluated by an interdisciplinary group of faculty trained in holistic grading procedures.

FACULTY TRAINING:

Faculty who offer writing intensive courses in the Liberal Studies Curriculum or in their major areas are supported in their efforts by an intensive workshop in the summer or the semester preceding the implementation of the program. During this workshop, they work with colleagues to plan assignment designs, to improve evaluative methods, and to learn fundamentals of writing theory as writing theory applies to learning. When faculty begin to implement these new writing methods in their courses, they have the focused attention of the director of writing programs, the writing laboratory staff, as well as the mentoring support of designated members of the college writing faculty. Thus, faculty members are offered theory, support in designing effective writing assignments and effective strategies for evaluating them, and practical assistance throughout the implementation process. The overall goal of this training matches that of the program itself: better teaching and learning, a more enjoyable teaching/learning experience for both students and teachers, and a concerted programmatic effort to integrate various kinds of learning for the Nazareth undergraduate.