GENERAL ACADEMIC INFORMATION

This page provides explanations about some of Yale’s academic practices. For more detail on the items below, consult the Yale College Programs of Study (YCPS).

Interpreting Course Numbers

Fall-term courses are indicated by the letter “a” (e.g., ENGL 201a), and spring-term courses by the letter “b” (e.g., ENGL 450b). In all departments, courses numbered 001–099 are seminars open only to first-year students. For more information on these seminars, visit the First-Year Seminar program website.

Departments number their courses according to different schemes, and course numbers do not necessarily correlate to whether or not courses are more advanced or more difficult. In some departments, courses are numbered in an ascending order, going from introductory to intermediate and advanced. In others, courses are grouped primarily by subject matter or language of instruction, with the result that the number of a course (usually with the exception of the 400 range) bears no particular relation to its level of difficulty. More precise indications about the level of a course may be found in the introduction to each department’s entry in the YCPS and in prerequisite information in the course listings.

Course Selection Period

Yale’s course selection period takes place during the first two weeks of classes and allows you to participate in courses that interest you without enrolling in them right away. After you arrive on campus, you choose courses to visit during the course selection period. From those you visit, you will enroll in four or five. Please be aware that classes conducted during the first two weeks of the term are regular, full-fledged classes with readings, homework and, occasionally, graded assignments. Be prepared to keep up with assignments and participate fully in each class in which you may wish to enroll.

Course Information and Enrollment

Before arriving in New Haven, you may want to browse through the course offerings listed in the YCPS and in Yale Course Search (YCS). During the final few weeks of the summer, you can view many course syllabi through the Yale Course Search system. During First-Year Orientation, your residential college dean and your first-year counselor will explain how to select courses online and complete your course schedule. You will also be able to view course evaluations for some of the classes you are considering.

Dates and Deadlines

In the Academic Regulations section of the YCPS, you can find most of the rules governing the requirements and options in the curriculum. Important related dates and deadlines are summarized in the Yale College Calendar with Pertinent Deadlines, also found in the YCPS. There are deadlines, for example, for withdrawing from a course, converting from a letter grade to the Credit/D/Fail option, and applying for a leave of absence. These deadlines are strictly enforced.

Credit/D/Fail Option

Any course in Yale College may be taken Credit/D/Fail, rather than for a letter grade. When a course is selected under this option, a grade of C– or above will be converted on the transcript to “CR” (for “credit”). Grades of D+, D, D–, or F will appear on the transcript as reported by the instructor. You may count up to four courses taken Credit/D/Fail toward the bachelor’s degree, and you may take as many as two courses Credit/D/Fail in a single term, as long as you elect at least two courses, representing at least two course credits, in the same term for letter grades.

There are some further restrictions on the use of the Credit/D/Fail option. You may not apply any Credit/D/Fail course toward fulfillment of the distributional requirements, and some departments will not accept courses taken Credit/D/Fail toward the requirements of the major. If you want to exercise the Credit/D/Fail option, you must declare your intention by midterm. The change from a letter grade to the Credit/D/Fail option, once made, cannot be reversed, even before the midterm deadline. If you want to earn acceleration credits through work in advanced courses, you may not use the Credit/D/Fail option in those courses, because acceleration credit is awarded only for grades of A, A–, B+, or B.

Reading Period

Reading period lasts about five days and comes between the end of classes and the beginning of the final examination period. During this time, students review or augment their course work and prepare for final examinations. Most courses do not meet during reading period. A course that does meet includes the phrase “meets during reading period” in its online course listing. Even if this phrase does not appear in the listing, the course instructor may still set review sessions or schedule extra classes during reading period.
Final Examinations and Term Papers

Courses typically end with a final examination or its equivalent, often a term paper. Some instructors elect a final test, a take-home examination, or some other substitute for the final examination. Individual course listings in Yale Course Search indicate whether the instructor plans to schedule a final examination.

Online Academic Resources

Many academic resources are available online, including the Yale College Programs of Study and Yale Course Search, a searchable database of the current term's courses. Course syllabi and supplements can also be found at Yale Course Search and Canvas.