

# DISTRIBUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The distributional requirements described below are intended to insure that all graduates of Yale College have an acquaintance with a broad variety of fields of inquiry and approaches to knowledge. These requirements are the only specific rules limiting the selection of courses outside a student's major program. By themselves, the distributional requirements constitute a minimal education, not a complete one, and represent the least that an educated person should seek to know. They are to be embraced as starting points, not goals.

## DISTRIBUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE

Students must fulfill disciplinary area requirements by taking no fewer than two course credits in the humanities and arts, two in the sciences, and two in the social sciences. Students must also fulfill skills requirements by taking at least two course credits in quantitative reasoning, two course credits in writing, and courses to further their foreign language proficiency. Depending on their level of accomplishment in foreign languages at matriculation, students may fulfill this last requirement with one, two, or three courses or by certain combinations of course work and approved study abroad.

**Area requirement in the humanities and arts (two course credits)** Study of the humanities and arts—those subjects that explore how we chronicle and interpret the expression of human experience—cultivates an appreciation of the past and enriches our capacity to participate in the life of our times. By engaging other cultures and civilizations, both ancient and modern, students gain insight into the experiences of others while also obtaining an opportunity to critically examine their own. Through the study and practice of the arts, students analyze, create, and perform works allowing them to explore or experience firsthand the joy and discipline of artistic expression. Rigorous and systematic study of the humanities and the arts fosters tolerance for ambiguity and sophisticated analytic skills that provide essential preparation for careers in most areas of contemporary life. But independently of any specific application, study of these subjects teaches understanding and delight in the highest achievements of humanity.

**Area requirement in the sciences (two course credits)** Science is the study of the principles of the physical and the natural world through observation and experimentation. The theoretical inquiry, experimental analysis, and first-hand problem-solving inextricably linked to scientific inquiry give rise to new modes of thought. Acquiring a broad view of what science is, what it has achieved, and what it might continue to achieve is an essential component of a college education. Close study of a science develops critical faculties that educated citizens need to evaluate natural phenomena and the opinions of experts, and to make, understand, and evaluate arguments about them. Scientific literacy teaches students to appreciate the beauty of the natural and physical worlds often hidden from casual observation but which, once revealed, lend richness to everyday life.

**Area requirement in the social sciences (two course credits)** Broadly conceived, the social sciences study human social behavior and networks using a variety of methodologies and both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The disciplines in the social sciences teach us about who we are as social beings and help us appreciate the perspective of the other as well as the particularities of society. Methods in the social sciences test for connections between the familiar and the foreign, the traditional and the contemporary, the individual and the group, the predicted result and the anomalous outcome. Their theories propose explanations for the entire range of human phenomena. Study of the social sciences prepares students for lives of civic engagement and develops a nuanced sense of the world around them.

**Skills requirement in foreign language (at least one course, depending on preparation)** The study of languages has long been one of the distinctive and defining features of a liberal arts education, and in the world of the twenty-first century, knowledge of more than one language is increasingly important. The benefits of language study include enhanced understanding of how languages work, often resulting in heightened sophistication in the use of one's own language; unmediated access to texts otherwise available only in translation, or not at all; and the ability to recognize and cross cultural barriers.

All Yale College students are required to engage in study of a foreign language, regardless of the level of proficiency at the time of matriculation. Depending on their preparation, students take one, two, or three terms of foreign language study to fulfill the distributional requirement. Students may complete an approved study abroad program in lieu of intermediate or advanced language study at Yale. Details of the foreign language distributional requirement are listed under Distributional Requirements in the Academic Regulations.

**Skills requirement in quantitative reasoning (two course credits)** The mental rigor resulting from quantitative study has been celebrated since ancient times, and applications of quantitative methods have proven critical to many different disciplines. Mathematics and statistics are basic tools for the natural and the social sciences, and they have become useful in many of the humanities as well. Information technology and the rigorous dissection of logical arguments in any discipline depend on algorithms and formal logical constructs. An educated person must be able to use quantitative information to make, understand, and evaluate arguments.

Many quantitative reasoning courses are taught through the departments of Mathematics, Statistics and Data Science, and Computer Science. Such courses may also be found in Archaeological Studies; Astronomy; Chemistry; Ecology and Evolutionary Biology; Economics; Engineering; Environmental Studies; Ethics, Politics, and Economics; Geology and Geophysics; Global Affairs; Linguistics; Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology; Music; Philosophy; Physics; Political Science; Psychology; and Sociology.

**Skills requirement in writing (two course credits)** The ability to write well is one of the hallmarks of a liberally educated person and is indispensable to advanced research in most disciplines. As students strengthen their writing skills, they develop intellectual practices that distinguish active from passive learners.

The English department in particular offers many courses that focus on writing clearly and cogently, and courses in other departments stress writing skills within the context of their disciplines. Over 450 courses, spanning approximately 50 different academic programs, give special attention to writing. Such courses, designated WR, do not necessarily require more writing than other courses; rather, they provide more help with writing assignments. Some characteristics of WR courses include writing to discover ideas, learning from model essays, detailed feedback, and reviewing writing in small groups. Note that credit toward the writing requirement cannot be earned in courses in creative writing (specifically poetry, fiction, and playwriting) nor in courses conducted in a language other than English.