

SPECIAL DIVISIONAL MAJORS

This major was created as an alternative for the student whose academic interests cannot be met within one of the existing departmental or special majors. The Committee on Honors and Academic Standing approves a small number of Special Divisional Majors each year in fields as diverse as Southeast Asia Studies, Land Use, or Visual Languages. Before these majors are approved, the chair of the committee designates one of the residential college deans as the DUS for the students.

Each Special Divisional Major completes a course of study comprising at least twelve advanced-level courses and a special project. Each student has two faculty advisers, one of whom, the primary adviser, must hold a regular teaching appointment on the Yale College faculty. Two questions that each prospective adviser must answer convincingly are: (1) "Are you satisfied that the aims of the program cannot be achieved within one of the departmental majors by combining electives with courses in a major field?" and (2) "Does the proposed program provide for a degree of breadth and depth equivalent to that of a departmental major in Yale College?"

The Committee on Honors and Academic Standing assumes that most students in Yale College are best served by majoring in regular departments or programs, and many Special Divisional Major programs begin with discussions between directors of undergraduate studies and students already registered as majors in a department. It is important, therefore, for the DUS to understand the aims and procedures of the Special Divisional Major and to be prepared to judge how a particular student's academic interests might best be met through it. A thorough description of the Special Divisional Major is published under Subjects of Instruction in the YCPS. Sample application and recommendation forms are available in PDF format under Appendix.

The Special Divisional Major was created to enable certain highly motivated students to satisfy the Yale College requirement that each student must complete a major in order to graduate. The committee therefore cannot approve a Special Divisional Major when it is proposed as one of two majors or when the student could, with a minimum of difficulty, complete the requirements for a major in one of the regular departments or programs. It is frequently in the best interests of both student and department if a proposed special major can be accommodated within a regular department or program by working out a modified form of the regular major.