

HUMANITIES

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The undergraduate program in Humanities offers both interdisciplinary breadth and intellectual depth, providing students the opportunity to integrate courses from across the humanistic disciplines into personally meaningful courses of study. Works of literature, music, history, philosophy, and the visual arts are brought into conversation with one another and with the history of ideas.

The major in Humanities asks students to begin with broad surveys of foundational works in at least two different cultural traditions, including at least one course on classical Western European texts. All majors take two specially commissioned core seminars, one on the question of what “modernity” is, another spending a whole term interpreting a single work (or small corpus of works) in great depth. Students then devise an area of focus according to their interests and with the help of appropriate faculty members.

COURSES FOR NONMAJORS

Students in all classes can find options in the varied course offerings, from special seminars for first-year students to the Franke and Shulman Seminars for seniors. Many courses are open to nonmajors.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Students are held to the requirements that were in place when they declared their major. However, with approval from the DUS, the following requirements, updated for the academic year 2025-2026, may be fulfilled by students who declared the major in a prior term.

See [Links to the attributes indicating courses approved for the Humanities major requirements.](#)

Fourteen term courses are required for the major; six core courses; one course in each of four areas of study in the humanities (which may include the Franke Seminar); three additional electives selected to complement the student's area of focus and approved by the director of undergraduate studies (DUS), and a one- or two-term senior essay. Majors are also required to keep an intellectual journal and are strongly encouraged to enroll in at least one term course in literature in a foreign language.

Core courses The major requires six core courses, two seminars in “Interpretations,” two seminars in “Modernities” and two lectures or seminars in “Traditions.” Interpretations and Modernities seminars are typically taught by a pair of faculty members from complementary disciplines. The two broad themes of the seminars remain consistent from year to year, but the material studied and the faculty members teaching change, allowing each class of students to explore the themes in different ways. The Traditions core courses focus on foundational works. No more than four of the six core courses may concern one world-historical tradition, broadly conceived.

Areas of study in the humanities One course is required in each of four areas: literature; visual, musical, or dramatic arts; science in the humanities; and intellectual history and historical analysis. Courses may be drawn from any department or program in Yale College, with the approval of the DUS.

Intellectual journal Students are encouraged to log entries outlining particularly striking moments in their intellectual lives, whether in courses or outside of them, and to keep track of questions they would like to pursue in their studies, including possible senior essay topics. Students submit a minimum of one journal entry each semester to the DUS.

Credit/D/Fail No more than two courses taken Credit/D/Fail may be applied toward the requirements of the major.

Outside credit Courses taken at another institution or during an approved summer or term-time study abroad program may count toward the major requirements with DUS approval.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

A one- or two-term senior essay is required (HUMS 4910).

ADVISING

Students are expected to declare their intent to major in Humanities in a meeting with the DUS before their junior year.

UNIQUE TO THE MAJOR

The Franke Seminar Sponsored by the Whitney Humanities Center and designed to speak across disciplinary lines to broad public and intellectual issues, the Franke Seminar includes a series of coordinated public lectures. The seminars are for enrolled students; the lecture series is open to the Yale and local communities. Humanities majors may enroll in a Franke Seminar with permission of the DUS and the instructor.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Prerequisites None

Number of courses 14 term courses (incl senior essay)

Distribution of courses 6 core courses, as specified; 1 course in each of 4 areas of student as specified; 3 electives in area of focus

Senior requirement Senior essay (HUMS 4910)

Intellectual journal A minimum of one journal entry every term