

# LIBERAL STUDIES PROGRAM

## Overview

### General Purpose

The Liberal Studies Program (LSP) is the general education curriculum taken by all students enrolled in the traditional undergraduate colleges at DePaul University. But it is more than that. As the core of the undergraduate curriculum, Liberal Studies is foundational for developing students' experience of the university's mission through their coursework. Liberal Studies is grounded in the University's Catholic and Vincentian values and enacts what our Mission Statement describes as a "commitment to high quality teaching and academic excellence, real-world experience, and an ethic of public service and systemic change."

Our approach to carrying out this commitment can best be summed up by DePaul's tag line: "Here We Do." Throughout the curriculum, students are called upon to join knowledge to action. At the same time, in dialogue with students' major field(s) of study, LSP courses model values of inclusivity, personalism, and professionalism that have shaped DePaul's distinctive culture for more than a century. Along the way, students work to enhance writing abilities, mathematical and technological proficiencies, and critical and creative thinking skills while broadening students' knowledge base beyond their chosen major. LSP courses foster an appreciation of different religious and philosophical worldviews, promote application of ethical reasoning, and realize new understanding of concepts and theories through multiple methods of inquiry and disciplinary perspective. In LSP seminars, students read primary texts, write research papers, and communicate their ideas orally. Essential intellectual skills are reinforced throughout the program with performance assignments, field observations, laboratory research, and more.

To reinforce its alignment with DePaul's mission and values, the Liberal Studies Program has adopted the University's six Learning Goals as its own:

1. Mastery of Content
2. Intellectual and Creative Skills
3. Personal and Social Responsibility
4. Intercultural and Global Understanding
5. Integration of Learning
6. Preparation for Career and Beyond

In its variety of intentional learning experiences, the Liberal Studies program is greater than the sum of its parts; it establishes a cumulative foundational experience that helps DePaul students shape purposeful lives and rewarding careers to benefit society in recognition of the dignity of all people.

### Curriculum

The Liberal Studies Program (LSP) has two primary components. The first is termed the Common Core, and consists of a series of classes taken sequentially by students as they progress towards their degree. Core requirements begin for incoming students in their first autumn quarter when all take a Chicago Quarter (CQ) course. From over a hundred different topic offerings, each student selects a single class that is either Discover Chicago, which includes an intensive immersion week experience prior to the start of fall classes, or Explore Chicago, which meets during the regular fall term. Regardless of type, all CQ instructors use both traditional and experiential pedagogies to teach students not

only relevant course content, but also information about the City's people, communities, institutions, and system of public transportation. All CQ classes also include a co-curricular component called the Common Hour, which is designed to facilitate students' transition to the college experience, and give them initial exposure to DePaul's distinctive mission.

Another Common Core requirement in the first year is First-year Writing. The WRD 103-WRD 104 sequence introduces students to different conventions of writing and instructs them how to analyze readings, to write for different audiences, and to take a rhetorical stance in their scholarly papers. (Students taking WRD 103 and/or WRD 104 at DePaul must receive grades of C- or better.) Upon successful completion of First-year Writing, students have the ability to express themselves creatively and can defend and document a clearly articulated thesis in a scholarly paper. The Focal Point Seminar (see College requirements) further emphasizes different forms of writing, oral communication skills, and seminar behavior, such that they are able to intellectually discuss and debate beyond their own opinions. Lastly, first-year students take (depending on College/major requirements) a Quantitative Reasoning course designed to develop numerical reasoning.

Students continue to take Common Core courses based on their class standing. In the second year, the requirement is the Seminar on Race, Power, and Resistance. This seminar draws students into key debates about race and encourages critical thinking and reflection in a diverse workplace and society. The LSP requirement for the junior year is an Experiential Learning course, which can take the form of doing laboratory or field research, studying abroad, engaging in community service, or completing an internship in a field of study. Students connect their experiences to in-class readings and writing assignments. The final Common Core course is the Capstone, which enables students to synthesize the methods and knowledge learned in their major field of study courses into a final project, while reflecting upon the values and content of their liberal studies classes.

The second component of the LSP is made up of seven distinct Learning Domains:

1. Arts and Literature
2. Historical Inquiry
3. Math and Computing
4. Philosophical Inquiry
5. Religious Dimensions
6. Scientific Inquiry, and
7. Social, Cultural, and Behavioral Inquiry

These Domains reflect a conventional liberal arts and sciences curriculum, yet are not based in any one discipline. Within any single Domain, basic criteria, learning outcomes, and modes of inquiry are shared, but the courses themselves come from many different departments, programs, and Colleges across the University. By having such broadly defined Learning Domains, students receiving a liberal education at DePaul are assured a breadth of pedagogical experiences but also enjoy great latitude in selecting, experiencing, and applying the many types of intellectual inquiry taking place in a modern university.

## Liberal Studies Program Essential Learning Outcomes

### Preamble

DePaul's Catholic, Vincentian, and urban character distinguishes its students' experiences. In turn, its Liberal Studies Program connects

students – in progressively more integrated ways – to the university's mission and to values associated with social justice, diversity, and the desire to work toward socially and environmentally sustainable communities.

To prepare its students to understand, engage, and effect change as global citizens, these revised Liberal Studies Program learning goals and outcomes provide students with an integrative and intellectually challenging education. The rhetorical, creative, intellectual, analytical, quantitative, and interdisciplinary knowledge gained from the program's connected coursework facilitates success as students and as life-long learners. The Liberal Studies Program supports the student's academic major with learning across disciplines – both in and beyond the classroom.

Faculty from virtually every department, interdisciplinary program, and college teach over 1,400 different courses from which students can choose to fulfill their Liberal Studies Program requirements. This wide spectrum of participation on the part of students and faculty alike contributes to a strong sense of intellectual community at DePaul University as well as a shared commitment to its mission and values.

### Goal 1. Mastery of Content

This goal embraces the breadth and depth of ideas, theories, approaches, and information which DePaul students encounter through and beyond their studies.

Outcomes: DePaul students will demonstrate and be able to apply:

- general knowledge of cultures, religions, science, the arts, history, and computational reasoning.
- specialized knowledge and skills from within a specific discipline or field.

### Goal 2. Intellectual and Creative Skills

In order to fully engage with knowledge, whether for a specific purpose or for its own sake, DePaul students are encouraged to develop the ability to think critically and imaginatively, formulate their own understanding, and effectively communicate their ideas. This goal articulates specific skills that comprise these broader abilities.

Outcomes: DePaul students will be able to:

- systematically access, analyze, and evaluate information and ideas from multiple sources in order to identify underlying assumptions and formulate conclusions.
- solve quantitative problems.
- create and support arguments using a variety of approaches.
- use existing knowledge to generate and synthesize ideas in original ways.
- communicate clearly in speech and writing.

### Goal 3. Personal and Social Responsibility

This goal honors the notion that knowledge reflects and contributes to the values of individuals and communities. DePaul students, in particular, are challenged to consider their own values in light of the university's mission.

Outcomes: DePaul students will be able to:

- articulate their own and others' beliefs about what it means to be human and to create a just society.
- articulate what is entailed in becoming a self-directed ethical decision-maker and living a life of personal integrity.
- evaluate ethical issues from multiple perspectives and employ those considerations to chart coherent and justifiable courses of action.
- benefit their communities through socially responsible engagement and leadership.

### Goal 4. Intercultural and Global Understanding

This goal speaks to the likelihood that, in our diverse and increasingly interdependent world, the future depends on individuals being able to learn from each other and make the best use of finite resources.

Outcomes: DePaul students will demonstrate:

- respect for and learning from the perspectives of others different from themselves.
- knowledge of global interconnectedness and interdependencies.
- knowledge to become a steward of global resources for a sustainable future.

### Goal 5. Integration of Learning

Given the wide range of opportunities for learning at DePaul, it is important for students to develop the ability to consider relationships among individual experiences of learning so as to make meaning of their education in all its variety.

Outcomes: DePaul students will be able to:

- relate their learning – curricular and co-curricular – to multiple fields and realms of experience.
- make connections among ideas and experiences in order to synthesize and transfer learning to daily practice.
- design, develop, and execute a significant intellectual project.

### Goal 6. Preparation for Career and Beyond

This final learning goal builds on all the rest and calls on students to be ready to apply their knowledge and skills to the changing world that awaits them.

Outcomes: DePaul students will be able to:

- set goals for future work that are the result of realistic self-appraisal and reflection.
- articulate their skills and knowledge and represent themselves to external audiences.
- work toward goals independently and in collaboration with others.
- employ technology to create, communicate, and synthesize ideas.
- set priorities and allocate resources.
- apply strategies for a practice of life-long learning.

### Additional Notes

The revised learning goals and outcomes are derived from national research and best practices surrounding liberal education. Building on the four pre-existing LSP meta-goals reflectiveness, value consciousness and ethical reasoning, multicultural perspective, creative and critical thinking, and recognizing the challenges and opportunities of the contemporary world, these revisions amplify the four traditional

outcomes of a liberal education<sup>1</sup> while engaging DePaul University's mission throughout the program.

<sup>1</sup> American Association of Colleges and Universities. College Learning for the New Global Century: A Report from the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise. (Washington, D.C., 2007) 11-50.