

# WESLEYAN'S CURRICULUM

Wesleyan University is dedicated to providing an education in the liberal arts that is characterized by boldness, rigor, and practical idealism. At Wesleyan, students have the opportunity to work at the highest levels, discover what they love to do, and apply their knowledge in ways the world finds meaningful. While Wesleyan has no core requirements, the University has established General Education Expectations that are designed to encourage breadth within the student educational experience. Students select courses in consultation with advisors, creating customized itineraries of study in three intellectual spheres: the arts and humanities (HA), the social and behavioral sciences (SBS), and the natural sciences and mathematics (NSM).

## OPEN CURRICULUM

When students direct their own education in consultation with intensively engaged faculty advisors, they learn to think independently, explore questions from multiple points of view, and develop habits of critical thinking that are hallmarks of a liberal education. Wesleyan upholds the principle that student choice fosters the drive to explore freely and seek connections across courses, generating the intellectual excitement that can fuel liberal education as a lifelong pursuit. With the freedom to sample liberally from across the curriculum, students are able to experience the surprise of unexpected ability in fields new to them and to make fruitful connections across subject areas that do not traditionally intersect. This can generate innovative depth of study and new ways of seeing—with students posing questions from one discipline to the assumptions of another.

## MAJORS, MINORS, AND CERTIFICATES AT WESLEYAN — AREAS OF STUDY

With a large variety of majors, minors, and certificates (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/academics/>), Wesleyan students have the opportunity to work at the highest level, discover what they love to do, and apply their knowledge in meaningful ways.

## MAJORS

A degree of disciplined mastery in a major field of learning is an important dimension of a liberal arts education. The major may help a student prepare for a specific profession or may be necessary for a more specialized education in graduate school or another postbaccalaureate educational institution. Majors can take several forms—a departmental or interdepartmental major or a college program (College of Letters or College of Social Studies). Generally, students declare a major in the second semester of their sophomore year—when they have sampled widely from different areas of the curriculum, have completed the first stage of their General Education Expectations, and are ready to develop deeper knowledge in a particular area of study.

## LINKED MAJORS, MINORS, AND CERTIFICATES

Some majors (College of Integrative Sciences, environmental studies) may only be declared as linked majors in conjunction with another major. In addition to major fields of study, Wesleyan also offers optional minor fields of study and

certificates (similar to interdisciplinary minors). Students may not declare more than a combined total of three majors, certificates, and minors.

## GENERAL EDUCATION EXPECTATIONS

Wesleyan's open curriculum challenges students to create their own plan for general education. Academic coherence here does not rely on a core curriculum or a set of required courses; instead, students propose their academic plan to their faculty advisors and recalibrate it with their advisors each semester as their discoveries lead them to pursue new areas or deepen existing strengths. By the end of the first two years, students are expected to have earned at least two course credits in each of the three areas (HA, SBS, NSM), all from different departments or programs. In the last two years, students are expected to take one additional course credit in each of the three areas. A student who does not meet the expectation of a total of nine general education course credits by the time of graduation will not be eligible for University Honors, Phi Beta Kappa, honors in general, and honors in certain departments, and may not declare more than a combined total of two majors, certificates, and minors.

## COMPETENCIES

To help students identify and describe the skills they gain on their journey through Wesleyan's open curriculum, we've developed a flexible framework of four competencies to reflect on and consider as students build—and share—their own personal narrative about their Wesleyan experience. The four competencies are: **Mapping:** Navigating Complex Environments; **Expressing:** Writing and Communication; **Mining:** Empirical Analysis and Interpretation; and **Engaging:** Negotiating Cultural Contexts.

*Mapping* is defined as the ability to examine the relationship of objects, concepts, spaces, and environments in the material and imagined worlds. It involves developing tools to create, manipulate, and navigate constructed and natural environments and charting movement through and interactions with space and its consequences. *Expressing* is defined as the ability to express thoughts, ideas, and emotions to others effectively and concisely through a variety of mediums and modalities. *Mining* is defined as the ability to use logical and empirical reasoning and methods to explicate, analyze, and quantify one's material and social realities. It involves learning about the measurement, analysis, summary, and presentation of information, including about the natural world, as well as answering questions, solving problems, making predictions, and testing and constructing theories by employing mathematical, statistical, logical, and scientific reasoning. *Engaging* is defined as the ability to comprehend, appreciate, and negotiate human and cultural differences as well as the complexity of one's own relation and accountability to wider sociohistorical dynamics. It involves reading, speaking, or understanding a second or third language (contemporary or classical); gaining experience working, studying, or traveling abroad, or in other unfamiliar cultural contexts; and participating in the political and social life of local and global communities.

## ACADEMIC ADVISING

An academic advisor is assigned to each first-year student from faculty who teach in a field in which the student has expressed interest. Once a student declares a major, the advisor is assigned from that department or program. Students, with the help of faculty advisors, typically put together an academic itinerary that includes lecture-style courses, smaller seminars, laboratories, and performance courses. Every student is given the opportunity to take a seminar course specially designed for first-year students. These first-year seminars (FYS) vary dramatically—from presenting the work of a specific thinker to introducing

an unfamiliar area of study—but all tend to emphasize the importance of writing at the university level and the methods used to collect, interpret, analyze, and present evidence as part of a scholarly argument. Faculty teaching these classes highlight the type of writing associated with their respective disciplines and help students improve how they develop, compose, organize, and revise their written work.

## **WESMAPS AND WESPORTAL**

WesMaps (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/wesmaps/>) is the indispensable online guide to the curriculum used by students to map their academic schedule each semester. WesPortal contains both personal information added by students and official information that helps track their progress toward fulfilling General Education Expectations, majors, and University requirements. WesPortal is an important advising tool for students and their faculty advisors. WesPortal applications provide students with online access to their course schedule, grades, academic history, Moodle, course registration, student accounts, campus events, and more. Using these applications, students and their advisors are able to make informed decisions leading to a thoughtful academic experience.