

COLLEGE OF LETTERS MAJOR

MAJOR DESCRIPTION

The College of Letters (COL) was founded in 1959 as a three-year interdisciplinary humanities program unique to Wesleyan University. The COL major integrates cultural competence, freedom of inquiry, critique, and rigor within a collaborative learning community, as manifest in our library where offices open into a shared space for study, discussion, research, workshops, readings, meals, and socializing. The structure of the major, smallness of classes, and openness to student concerns sustain a close rapport and lively dialogue between and among all COL professors and majors.

The COL curriculum coheres the benefits of rigorous requirements, small classes, and student-specific design. All majors take a sequence of five core co-taught colloquium seminars which integrate interdisciplinary and critical study of cultures and languages from all across the Mediterranean, Europe, and the Atlantic, and from antiquity to the present. Each student also collaborates with their academic advisor to choose electives in history, language, literature, and philosophy, to select a study abroad program, and to design a capstone project suited to their own academic and creative ambitions.

The COL pedagogy combines high expectations with creative exploration and communal support. In all courses taken for the major students receive honest written evaluations rather than letter grades. And, at the major's midpoint, students are independently evaluated by non-Wesleyan professors in the Junior Comprehensive Examinations. Constructive feedback is contextualized by an ethos of care in which professors actively equip students as collaborators in a shared intellectual project.

The flexibility and cultural range of the COL major equips graduates for success in vocations and careers as varied as Wesleyan students in general. The rigor of the COL major explicitly sets up our students for graduate degrees across the humanities, social sciences, law, professional schools, as well as (when combined with another major) science and medicine. Recent graduates from can be found in traditional and new media, government and intelligence, advocacy and policy NGOs, tech and AI, business and marketing, education administration and teaching, library science and art curation, medicine and healthcare, psychiatry and counseling, data and software, publishing and editing, business and finance, communications and creative writing, scriptwriting and film production, and more.

ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

The College of Letters is a three-year major that students typically declare in the spring semester of their first year at Wesleyan. Declaration forms and further information can be found on the COL website under "Declare the Major (<https://www.wesleyan.edu/col/apply.html>).\" Submission of these forms provides the department with information needed to advise an incoming major on all aspects of their academic career, including their choice of a foreign language and study abroad planning. Students will be assigned a COL advisor within two weeks of declaring the major. Sophomore transfer students may declare the major before or during orientation.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

The program consists of five components and leads to eleven course credits:

- Five colloquia designed to acquaint students with works of predominantly European literature, history, and philosophy in (respectively)

Code	Title	Hours
Colloquia		
COL241	Sophomore Colloquium 1: Antiquity	1
COL242	Sophomore Colloquium 2: The Middle Ages	1
COL243	Junior Colloquium: The Early Modern Period	1
COL245	Senior Colloquium 1: The 18th and 19th Century	1
COL246	Senior Colloquium 2: The 20th and 21st Century	1

- Four electives. The minimum required is one in history, one in philosophy, one in literature/representation, and one in the major's target foreign-language literature. These specialized seminars allow students to shape their COL major around a particular interest.

Code	Title	Hours
Electives		
History		
COL221	Your Revolutionary Life: Biography as Political Power from Antiquity to Modernity	1
COL228	Virtue and Vice in History, Literature, and Philosophy	1
COL247	The Fall of Rome and Other Stories	1
COL253	Journey to the Divine: Islamic Mysticism in Thought and Practice	1
COL273	The History of Science in Islam	1
COL275	Moral Complexity in Islam: Origins to the Present	1
COL282	Death and the Limits of Representation	1
COL288Z	Solitude, Society and Loneliness in Romanticism and Modern Culture	1
COL295	Rome After Rome: Culture and Empire of Constantinople	1
COL301	Researching and Writing Historical Narrative Nonfiction: A Workshop	1
COL350	History as Tragedy: Genre, Gender, and Power in the Alexiad of Anna Komnena	1
COL354Z	Self and Text in Roman North Africa: Augustine's Confessions	1
COL375	Advanced Research in the Traveler's Lab	1
GRST294	Civic Responsibility and Places of Remembrance: Historical Consciousness in Germany and Beyond	1
GRST320	Places of Remembrance: Historical Consciousness in Germany	1
HIST215	European Intellectual History to the Renaissance	1
HIST216	European Intellectual History since the Renaissance	1
HIST227	Finance, the Stock Market, and the History of Economic Thought	1

HIST242	World History	1	COL230	Longform Narrative	1
HIST261	Enlightenment and Science	1	COL238	Animal Theories/Human Fictions	1
HIST291	Gender and History: Global Feminist Theories and Narratives of the Past (FGSS Gateway)	1	COL250	The Renaissance Woman	1
HIST338	History and Theory	1	COL252	Writing Love: Articulations of Passion, Genres of Intimacy	1
HIST391	The Treason of the Intellectuals: Power, Ethics, and Cultural Production	1	COL254	Folly & Enlightenment: Madness Before and After the Mind/Body Split	1
Philosophy		1	COL256	European Realist Novels	1
CHUM339	Catching Glimpses: Perceiving Infinitesimals in the Scientific Revolution	1	COL257	Remembering Selves: Forces and Forms of Autobiography	1
CHUM398	Marxism and Climate Crisis	1	COL258	The Word for World is Information: Ideologies of Language in Science Fiction & Film	1
COL228	Virtue and Vice in History, Literature, and Philosophy	1	COL259	The Human Condition: Arendt, Nietzsche, Marx	1
COL253	Journey to the Divine: Islamic Mysticism in Thought and Practice	1	COL265	Frankfurt School Critical Theory, Then and Now	1
COL259	The Human Condition: Arendt, Nietzsche, Marx	1	COL270	Modernist City-Texts	1
COL265	Frankfurt School Critical Theory, Then and Now	1	COL274	Outsiders in European Literature	1
COL266	History and Limits of Aesthetic Theory	1	COL282	Death and the Limits of Representation	1
COL269	Modern Aesthetic Theory	1	COL288Z	Solitude, Society and Loneliness in Romanticism and Modern Culture	1
COL273	The History of Science in Islam	1	COL301	Researching and Writing Historical Narrative Nonfiction: A Workshop	1
COL275	Moral Complexity in Islam: Origins to the Present	1	COL305	The Critic and Her Publics	1
COL282	Death and the Limits of Representation	1	COL309	Truth & the Poet: Lyric Subjectivity and Phenomenology	1
COL283	The Rationalist Tradition in Early Modern European Philosophy	1	COL310	More-Than-Human-Worlds: Theories and Fictions	1
COL290	Nietzsche - Science, Psychology, Genealogy	1	COL311	Translation Workshop in Early Modern Spain: Topographies of Love, Arcadia, and History	1
COL292	Reason and Its Limits	1	COL321	Dialogues of Love: A Close Reading	1
COL300	Infinity and the Mathematization of Nature: Early Modern Perspectives	1	COL329	Madness and Its Others: The Ethics of Intelligibility	1
COL339	Reading Theories	1	COL336	Theories of Translation	1
GRST250	Cultural Criticism and Aesthetic Theory: Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno	1	COL337	What is (a) Language?	1
GRST261	Reading Nietzsche	1	COL338	Utter Nonsense: Modernist Experiments with Meaning	1
HIST338	History and Theory	1	COL339	Reading Theories	1
HIST391	The Treason of the Intellectuals: Power, Ethics, and Cultural Production	1	COL373	"Real" Love: Subjects of Unreason	1
PHIL210	Living a Good Life	1	ENGL275Z	"Like Herding Cats"	1
PHIL250	Thinking By Analogy: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form	1	GRST250	Cultural Criticism and Aesthetic Theory: Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno	1
PHIL303	Plato's REPUBLIC	1	GRST251	Kafka: Literature, Law, and Power	1
PHIL350	Radical Self-Care	1	GRST279	Good, Evil, Human: German Fairy Tales and Their Cultural Impact	1
Literature/Representation		1	GRST294	Civic Responsibility and Places of Remembrance: Historical Consciousness in Germany and Beyond	1
CHUM398	Marxism and Climate Crisis	1	GRST386	German Romanticism: Disenchantment and Re-enchantment	1
CLST340	Daemons, Enigmas, and the Cosmic Image: Classical and Modern Allegory	1	REES265	When the Empire Strikes Back: (Post) Colonial Theory and Fiction	1
COL218	The Family Memoir: A Contemporary Study of the Genre	1	RL&L226	The Cosmos of Dante's "Comedy"	1
COL225	20th-Century Franco-Caribbean Literature and the Search for Identity	1			
COL227	Life Writing: Writing About the Self and from Experience	1			
COL227Z	Life Writing: Writing about the Self and from Experience	1			

RL&L236	Don Quixote: How to Read the Ultimate Novel	1	FREN315	The Politics of the French Language and the Birth of the French State	1
WRCT210Z	Contemporary Short Stories in Translation	1	FREN316	Women Writing in the Renaissance	1
WRCT288	Introduction to Journalism: Constructing the News	1	FREN317	The New World Bites Back: Cannibalism and the Colonial Encounter	1
WRCT330	The Craft of Criticism	1	FREN330	Lancelot, Guinevere, Grail: Enigma in the Romances of Chretien de Troyes	1
WRCT413	The Fact: Master Class on Fact Checking	0.25	FREN333	Asia and the Making of France	1
Foreign Language Literature		1	FREN334	Days and Knights of the Round Table	1
CHUM389	The Mediterranean Archipelago: Literary and Cultural Representations	1	FREN356	From the Diary to the Stage: Women Writers and Literary Genres from the 17th to the 21st Centuries	1
COL225	20th-Century Franco-Caribbean Literature and the Search for Identity	1	FREN357	Autobiography and Photography; Text and Image	1
COL265	Frankfurt School Critical Theory, Then and Now	1	FREN372	Exoticism: Imaginary Geographies in 18th- and 19th-Century French Literature	1
FREN217	Exoticism: Imaginary Geographies in the 19th-century French Short Story	1	FREN379	Literature and Crisis	1
FREN220	Lancelot, Guinevere, Grail: Enigma in the Romances of Chretien de Troyes	1	FREN391	Diderot: An Encyclopedic Mind	1
FREN221	French Mythologies	1	FREN397	Forbidden Love: From the Middle Ages to the French Revolution	1
FREN222	Love and Loss in Medieval and Early Modern French Literature and Culture	1	FREN399	French Histories: National Identity and Narratives since the Third Republic	1
FREN224	Cultural Mo(uve)ments from the 19th to 21st Centuries	1	GRST320	Places of Remembrance: Historical Consciousness in Germany	1
FREN228	Fight like the French: Debates, Quarrels and Polemics in French Culture	1	GRST335	Writing between Cultures: German Literature and Film by Authors of Foreign Descent	1
FREN230	Knights, Fools, and Lovers: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance French Culture	1	GRST342	Empire, Memory, Translation: A Seminar on the Rings of Saturn	1
FREN231	By Sword, By Cross, and By Pen: An Introduction to Early Modern French Literature and Culture	1	GRST386	German Romanticism: Disenchantment and Re-enchantment	1
FREN232	French Society in Music From the Roaring Twenties to Today	1	GRST390	Romanticism-Realism-Modernism	1
FREN234	Francophone Belgian Culture	1	ITAL223	Home Movies: Italian "Families" on Film	1
FREN238	Representing the Self, Representing Yourself	1	ITAL241	Antonioni and Cinema of the Environment	1
FREN239	A Virtual Semester in Paris	1	ITAL260	Castles of Cards: Italian Romance Epic Storytelling Lab	1
FREN240	Cinema and the French Theatrical Tradition	1	RL&L123Z	Love, Sex, and Marriage in Renaissance Europe	1
FREN241	Seeing Is Believing?: The Search for Cinematic Truth	1	RL&L234	Cuneiform to Kindle: Fragments of a Material History of Literature	1
FREN254	Paris to Saigon: French Representations of Asia	1	RL&L236	Don Quixote: How to Read the Ultimate Novel	1
FREN273	The Business of Letters: The French Epistolary Novel	1	SPAN230	Heroes, Lovers, and Swindlers: Medieval and Renaissance Spanish Literature and History	1
FREN275	Histories of Race: Science and Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment	1	SPAN231	Classic Spanish Plays: Love, Violence, and (Poetic) Justice on the Early Modern Stage	1
FREN305	Negotiating French Identity: Migration and Identity in Contemporary France	1	SPAN236	Cervantes	1
FREN306	Spectacles of Violence in Early Modern French Tragedy	1	SPAN250	Modern Spain: Literature, Painting, and the Arts in Their Historical Context	1
FREN307	Exoticism: Imaginary Geographies in the 19th-century French Short Story	1	SPAN254	The World of Federico García Lorca: Tradition and Modernity in the Spanish Avant-Garde	1
FREN309	Writing Childhood in Contemporary French Literature	1	SPAN257	Performing Ethnicity: Gypsies and the Culture of Flamenco in Spain	1
FREN310	French Crowds, Mobs, and Mobilities	1	SPAN260	Between Word and World: Major Spanish Poets of the 20th Century	1
FREN314	From the Diary to the Graphic novel, Women Writers from the 17th to the 21st Centuries	1	SPAN264	Orientalism: Spain and Africa	1

- Capstone Project. A two-semester capstone project on a topic chosen in discussion with the COL major advisor, supervised by a professor with expertise appropriate to the project. This project should bring together the student's work in the COL with their own intellectual journey. The capstone is taken on either the "Thesis Track" or "Essay Track"
 - Thesis Track: (a) COL409 **and** (b) COL410 (or the equivalent in another department if the thesis is to also be submitted there)
 - Essay Track: (a) Either COL403 or COL404 **and** (b) an additional elective (in history, philosophy, literature/representation, or Foreign Language)
- Study abroad, in the spring semester of the junior year (or in certain situations, in the summer following the sophomore or junior year), usually in Europe or in another country (if approved by the director of the COL) where the major's selected foreign language is spoken.
- One comprehensive examination in November/December of the junior year, covering the texts read in the first three colloquia.

In all these contexts, much emphasis is put on the development of skills in writing, speaking, and analytical argument. Students are encouraged to take intellectual risks, and for this reason letter grades are not given in courses taken for COL major credit; also, COL seminars generally require papers rather than final examinations. Instead of giving grades, tutors write detailed evaluations of their students' work at the end of each semester, and these are kept on record (and discussed with each student upon request). Our general goal is cultivation of "the educated imagination."

Courses that students take as first-years before their declaration of the COL major cannot count for major credit or as an elective. The four electives required are designed to be taken in conjunction with the COL colloquium to foster intellectual synergy for all students in the major and their cohort.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

The College of Letters (COL) is a three-year, interdisciplinary major for the study of European literature, history, and philosophy, from antiquity to the present. During these three years, students learn how to think and write critically about texts in relation to their contexts and influences—both European and non-European—and in relation to the disciplines that shape and are shaped by them.

Through a required sequence of five colloquia in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Early Modern period, the 19th and then the 20th and 21st centuries, students learn about the emergence of the constitutive idea of Europe out of Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome, and the contested history of Europe's diverse and changing social norms and cultural expressions. Over these three years, students also learn about the emergence and change of the disciplines as well as the forms of argumentation associated with each. Collaborative team-teaching in the first three colloquia fosters this pedagogical goal, ensuring that distinct disciplinary perspectives are both represented in conversation and in the classroom. Finally, majors become proficient in a foreign language through study abroad, where they also deepen their knowledge of another culture.

Assessment of these goals takes place continuously over the three years of the major. In lieu of grades, students receive detailed written evaluations for each of their COL courses, which address both written work and class participation. Study abroad is required in the second semester of the junior year, and in order to be accepted for the study abroad program of their choosing, students must prove that they have acquired the necessary level of language proficiency. When abroad they take courses taught in the foreign language and when they return they must continue to maintain proficiency by taking at least one upper-level seminar in that language. Toward the end of the fall semester of their junior year, majors take comprehensive examinations that are planned,

administered, and graded by two external examiners, representing different disciplines and with specializations in different time periods. The written portion of the comprehensive exam tests knowledge of the material covered in the first three colloquia and evaluates the students' ability to analyze and draw from a variety of sources in order to develop and support coherent, integrative, and interdisciplinary arguments about them. The oral portion of the exam tests the students' ability to orally defend and/or expand their arguments in a face-to-face conversation. In keeping with the COL's preference for evaluations over grades, the examiners' grading scale of Credit, Honors, and High Honors accompanies a written evaluation of each student's work on both parts of the exam. During the senior year, students must complete an honors project in their choice of disciplines and media. Senior theses (taking place over two semesters) are evaluated by two professors who are not the student's advisor, in order to assure an objective assessment. One of the two evaluators is always a non-COL professor. Honors essays (over one semester) require one evaluating professor who is not the advisor.

By virtue of the Junior Comprehensive Examinations, the COL also undergoes its own yearly self-evaluation. The evaluations written for each student by the external examiners are also made available to the COL director, who looks to see if there is a trend in the overall strengths and weaknesses among the students. In addition, the examiners are asked to give their assessment of the entire COL program, first in a meeting with us and then in a letter that they may write together or individually. These assessments are shared with the department as a whole and any suggestions for changes to the program or the teaching are taken seriously. Indeed, it is because of these yearly assessments that we have made significant changes in our curriculum and, most notably, in the sequence of the colloquia.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Life in COL. The College of Letters attempts to integrate the social and intellectual lives of its members by inviting guest lecturers and by providing opportunities for students and faculty to meet such guests (and one another) informally. There are also regular informal social gatherings in the College of Letters library. The structure of the College of Letters and the smallness of its classes bring about a close rapport between tutors and students and a lively and continuing dialogue among students of different classes.

After graduation. The academic standards of the College of Letters are reflected in the fact that its graduates have consistently entered the best graduate and professional schools, including schools of law, medicine, and business administration, as well as communications and the liberal arts. They also have won national fellowships and scholarships.