

# 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, eleven course credits in total. These are: Five Colloquia, a mid-point Junior Comprehensive Examination, a Study Abroad semester, Four Electives, and a Capstone Project.

COL students are encouraged and expected to take intellectual risks in fulfilling these requirements. To facilitate this culture, each course in the program is taken Cr/U (rather than for a letter grade) and assessed through detailed written evaluations filed with the registrar and the COL at the end of the semester. Upon graduation the Director compiles these assessments into a Director's Letter, a summary of each student's intellectual trajectory and accomplishments in the program, which can (upon request) accompany their official Wesleyan transcript. In addition to a broad and deep multi-cultural and inter-disciplinary competence, and their inclusion in a lifelong learning community, the COL equips students with skills in writing, speaking, analytical argument, and creative critique.

### Requirement 1. Colloquia

Five colloquium seminars are taken in sequence with the cohort of majors. The COL Colloquia integrate, in a chronological sequence from antiquity to the present, interdisciplinary and critical study of cultures and languages from all across the Mediterranean, Europe, and the Atlantic.

### Requirement 2. Junior Comprehensive Examination

In November and December of the Junior year, a written and oral examination is administered and assessed by two carefully-chosen non-Wesleyan professors. The Junior Comps Exam covers the texts read in the first three colloquia and assesses students' mastery of the discussion, analysis, and writing skills taught to that point.

### Requirement 3. Study Abroad

In consultation with their advisor, students identify a study abroad program which will enrich their connection to the COL curriculum and advance their language acquisition. This is an optional requirement for International Students (who are already studying abroad). Almost all students fulfill this requirement immediately following the Junior Comprehensive Examination, as a semester abroad in the Spring semester of the Junior year. Students may propose alternative timelines for compelling academic reasons and with the support of their advisor.

### Requirement 4. Electives

Four electives, intentionally selected in discussion with the advisor, with a preference for small discussion-oriented and writing-intensive courses. One elective is taken in each of four areas: History, Philosophy, Literature/Representation, and advanced Foreign Language. Academic advisors approve that the language elective is connected to the core COL curriculum, and at a sufficiently advanced level. Each elective must be taken in the Cr/U grading mode (with a written semester-end evaluation rather than a letter grade). Students and advisors collaborate on crafting a set of specialized electives suited (where possible) to productive conjunctions with the content of the colloquia, to the intellectual trajectory unique to each student, and to set up the student's capstone project.

An up-to-date list of pre-approved electives in each of the four core areas is provided below (note: some interdisciplinary courses are pre-approved for multiple areas).

Courses taken prior to declaring the major (i.e., during the first year) will not count as one of the electives for major credit. Rather, students select their four electives in consultation with their major advisor as part of an intentional plan. Such intentionality fosters an intellectual synergy for all students in the major and their cohort, and for the entire learning community.

#### Elective List

Code	Title	Hours
<b>History</b>		
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
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
COL283	The Rationalist Tradition in Early Modern European Philosophy	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
HIST261	Enlightenment and Science	1
HIST291	Gender and History: Global Feminist Theories and Narratives of the Past (FGSS Gateway)	1
HIST338	History and Theory	1
HIST391	The Treason of the Intellectuals: Power, Ethics, and Cultural Production	1
<b>Literature/Representations</b>		
CLST340	Daemons, Enigmas, and the Cosmic Image: Classical and Modern Allegory	1
COL218	The Family Memoir: A Contemporary Study of the Genre	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
COL230	Longform Narrative	1
COL238	Animal Theories/Human Fictions	1
COL250	The Renaissance Woman	1
COL252	Writing Love: Articulations of Passion, Genres of Intimacy	1
COL254	Folly & Enlightenment: Madness Before and After the Mind/Body Split	1
COL256	European Realist Novels	1
COL257	Remembering Selves: Forces and Forms of Autobiography	1
COL258	The Word for World is Information: Ideologies of Language in Science Fiction & Film	1
COL259	The Human Condition: Arendt, Nietzsche, Marx	1
COL265	Frankfurt School Critical Theory, Then and Now	1
COL270	Modernist City-Texts	1
COL274	Outsiders in European Literature	1
COL282	Death and the Limits of Representation	1
COL288Z	Solitude, Society and Loneliness in Romanticism and Modern Culture	1
COL301	Researching and Writing Historical Narrative Nonfiction: A Workshop	1
COL305	The Critic and Her Publics	1
COL309	Truth & the Poet: Lyric Subjectivity and Phenomenology	1
COL310	More-Than-Human-Worlds: Theories and Fictions	1
COL311	Translation Workshop in Early Modern Spain: Topographies of Love, Arcadia, and History	1
COL321	Dialogues of Love: A Close Reading	1
COL329	Madness and Its Others: The Ethics of Intelligibility	1
COL336	Theories of Translation	1
COL337	What is (a) Language?	1
COL338	Utter Nonsense: Modernist Experiments with Meaning	1
COL339	Reading Theories	1
COL373	"Real" Love: Subjects of Unreason	1
ENGL275Z	"Like Herding Cats"	1
GRST250	Cultural Criticism and Aesthetic Theory: Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno	1
GRST251	Kafka: Literature, Law, and Power	1
GRST279	Good, Evil, Human: German Fairy Tales and Their Cultural Impact	1
GRST294	Civic Responsibility and Places of Remembrance: Historical Consciousness in Germany and Beyond	1
GRST386	German Romanticism: Disenchantment and Re-enchantment	1
RL&L226	The Cosmos of Dante's "Comedy"	1
RL&L236	Don Quixote: How to Read the Ultimate Novel	1
WRCT210Z	Contemporary Short Stories in Translation	1

Philosophy					
CHUM339	Catching Glimpses: Perceiving Infinitesimals in the Scientific Revolution	1	FREN238	Representing the Self, Representing Yourself	1
COL228	Virtue and Vice in History, Literature, and Philosophy	1	FREN239	A Virtual Semester in Paris	1
COL259	The Human Condition: Arendt, Nietzsche, Marx	1	FREN240	Cinema and the French Theatrical Tradition	1
COL265	Frankfurt School Critical Theory, Then and Now	1	FREN241	Seeing Is Believing?: The Search for Cinematic Truth	1
COL266	History and Limits of Aesthetic Theory	1	FREN254	Paris to Saigon: French Representations of Asia	1
COL269	Modern Aesthetic Theory	1	FREN273	The Business of Letters: The French Epistolary Novel	1
COL273	The History of Science in Islam	1	FREN275	Histories of Race: Science and Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment	1
COL275	Moral Complexity in Islam: Origins to the Present	1	FREN305	Negotiating French Identity: Migration and Identity in Contemporary France	1
COL282	Death and the Limits of Representation	1	FREN306	Spectacles of Violence in Early Modern French Tragedy	1
COL283	The Rationalist Tradition in Early Modern European Philosophy	1	FREN307	Exoticism: Imaginary Geographies in the 19th-century French Short Story	1
COL290	Nietzsche - Science, Psychology, Genealogy	1	FREN309	Writing Childhood in Contemporary French Literature	1
COL292	Reason and Its Limits	1	FREN310	French Crowds, Mobs, and Mobilities	1
COL300	Infinity and the Mathematization of Nature: Early Modern Perspectives	1	FREN314	From the Diary to the Graphic novel, Women Writers from the 17th to the 21st Centuries	1
COL339	Reading Theories	1	FREN315	The Politics of the French Language and the Birth of the French State	1
GRST250	Cultural Criticism and Aesthetic Theory: Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno	1	FREN316	Women Writing in the Renaissance	1
GRST261	Reading Nietzsche	1	FREN317	The New World Bites Back: Cannibalism and the Colonial Encounter	1
HIST338	History and Theory	1	FREN330	Lancelot, Guinevere, Grail: Enigma in the Romances of Chretien de Troyes	1
HIST391	The Treason of the Intellectuals: Power, Ethics, and Cultural Production	1	FREN333	Asia and the Making of France	1
PHIL210	Living a Good Life	1	FREN334	Days and Knights of the Round Table	1
PHIL250	Thinking By Analogy: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form	1	FREN356	From the Diary to the Stage: Women Writers and Literary Genres from the 17th to the 21st Centuries	1
PHIL303	Plato's REPUBLIC	1	FREN357	Autobiography and Photography; Text and Image	1
PHIL350	Radical Self-Care	1	FREN372	Exoticism: Imaginary Geographies in 18th- and 19th-Century French Literature	1
Advanced Foreign Language			FREN379	Literature and Crisis	1
CHUM389	The Mediterranean Archipelago: Literary and Cultural Representations	1	FREN391	Diderot: An Encyclopedic Mind	1
COL225	20th-Century Franco-Caribbean Literature and the Search for Identity	1	FREN397	Forbidden Love: From the Middle Ages to the French Revolution	1
COL265	Frankfurt School Critical Theory, Then and Now	1	FREN399	French Histories: National Identity and Narratives since the Third Republic	1
FREN217	Exoticism: Imaginary Geographies in the 19th-century French Short Story	1	GRST320	Places of Remembrance: Historical Consciousness in Germany	1
FREN220	Lancelot, Guinevere, Grail: Enigma in the Romances of Chretien de Troyes	1	GRST335	Writing between Cultures: German Literature and Film by Authors of Foreign Descent	1
FREN221	French Mythologies	1	GRST342	Empire, Memory, Translation: A Seminar on the Rings of Saturn	1
FREN222	Love and Loss in Medieval and Early Modern French Literature and Culture	1	GRST386	German Romanticism: Disenchantment and Re-enchantment	1
FREN224	Cultural Mo(ue)ments from the 19th to 21st Centuries	1	GRST390	Romanticism-Realism-Modernism	1
FREN228	Fight like the French: Debates, Quarrels and Polemics in French Culture	1	ITAL223	Home Movies: Italian "Families" on Film	1
FREN230	Knights, Fools, and Lovers: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance French Culture	1	ITAL241	Antonioni and Cinema of the Environment	1
FREN231	By Sword, By Cross, and By Pen: An Introduction to Early Modern French Literature and Culture	1	ITAL260	Castles of Cards: Italian Romance Epic Storytelling Lab	1
FREN232	French Society in Music From the Roaring Twenties to Today	1			
FREN234	Francophone Belgian Culture	1			

RL&L123Z	Love, Sex, and Marriage in Renaissance Europe	1
RL&L234	Cuneiform to Kindle: Fragments of a Material History of Literature	1
RL&L236	Don Quixote: How to Read the Ultimate Novel	1
SPAN230	Heroes, Lovers, and Swindlers: Medieval and Renaissance Spanish Literature and History	1
SPAN231	Classic Spanish Plays: Love, Violence, and (Poetic) Justice on the Early Modern Stage	1
SPAN236	Cervantes	1
SPAN250	Modern Spain: Literature, Painting, and the Arts in Their Historical Context	1
SPAN254	The World of Federico García Lorca: Tradition and Modernity in the Spanish Avant-Garde	1
SPAN257	Performing Ethnicity: Gypsies and the Culture of Flamenco in Spain	1
SPAN260	Between Word and World: Major Spanish Poets of the 20th Century	1
SPAN264	Orientalism: Spain and Africa	1

### Requirement 5. Capstone Project

A two-semester capstone project on a topic chosen in discussion with the major advisor, supervised by a professor with expertise appropriate to the project. The capstone 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)

## 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 19<sup>th</sup> and then the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 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.