A Brief Overview of the Program

A Major Field of Study

*Students complete all prescribed work in a major, including a senior thesis or a comprehensive exam, as determined by the major department or program.*

By completing a major students achieve a depth of knowledge within a discipline or area of study and become acquainted with its scope and methods. Specialization provides the opportunity for students to work intensively on a particular topic within their major field, an experience that fosters academic confidence and an understanding of the nature and limits of expertise.

Two General Education Concentrations

*Students complete the prescribed work in 2 general education concentrations of 4 courses each, chosen from a set that is structured by faculty on the basis of a clearly articulated organizing principle.*

General education concentrations expose students to a variety of fields in addition to their major and foster their ability to integrate their learning across contexts and over time. The perspectives and skills students learn in other disciplines and fields enhance the knowledge they acquire in their majors. Concentrations may also include relevant non-course-based experiences.

Concentrations may be of two types:
- Concentrations centering on a particular issue, topic, or area of inquiry identified by self-constituted groups of faculty in different disciplines
- Concentrations within existing departments or programs.

Three Writing Attentive Courses

*Students obtain 3 “W” credits:*
- 1 at the first-year level
- 1 at the sophomore-junior level
- 1 at the senior level

W-designated courses focus on what writing well has to do with thinking well. First-year level W-courses enhance students' understanding of how analysis and intellectual discovery shape the process of writing. Second-level writing courses (taken during the sophomore or junior year) further students' ability to develop and refine arguments in the context of study relevant to particular academic disciplines or programs. Seniors write a senior thesis or complete a writing-attentive senior capstone course, as determined by their major department or program.

Scientific Reasoning, Laboratory Experience, and Quantitative Literacy

*Students complete 3 distinct courses:*
- 1 scientific reasoning (“S”) course, which may or may not have a laboratory or field work component
- 1 course that includes an “L” section, i.e., a regularly scheduled laboratory or field work component
- 1 course in quantitative literacy (“Q”)

Scientific reasoning courses are those whose primary focus is to develop an understanding of the nature of scientific knowledge. They emphasize the inductive character of scientific reasoning, the desirability of theories that unify a broad range of observations, and the extent to which the reliability of conclusions is determined by the quality of the observations.

Laboratory or field work components of courses provide students with hands-on experience making their own observations or measurements. This process is particularly well suited to teaching students to evaluate data critically and to judge the validity of conclusions drawn from them.

Quantitative literacy courses are those that teach students to understand quantitative information and enable them to evaluate arguments and make informed decisions based on that information.