

## Liberal Learning-1

### Liberal Learning

Robert J. Anderson, *Assistant Provost for Liberal Learning and Academic Advising*

The College of New Jersey aims to educate students for citizenship in a modern democracy. Proceeding from the College's mission and its "Guiding Principles for Academic Work," liberal learning has three interdependent structural elements. The first sparks intellectual and scholarly growth characterized by students' increasing ability to pose intellectually challenging questions, confront significant problems, and apply focused rigor in seeking promising resolutions. This element ensures that learners gain habits of mind necessary to study and understand human knowledge and how it applies to complex problems. The second element enables students to relate beliefs, values, and intellectual habits to their civic role in society. Such vision requires deep understandings of ways race, ethnicity, and gender have shaped local and global communities. The third element fosters familiarity with essential knowledge about broad sectors of human inquiry. Such familiarity enables students to be conversant in the broad range of intellectual discourse.

Elements of liberal learning include:

#### **I. Intellectual and Scholarly Growth:**

All first-year TCNJ students take a seminar introducing them to serious scholarship and the life of the mind. FSP/First Seminar enables them to demonstrate fundamental dispositions and abilities to engage in academic inquiry. Course sections are based on themes selected by each professor, designed to be intellectually stimulating and inclusive of students across all programs. Professors serve as mentors, assisting students in thinking about college and life. A student's First Seminar cannot fulfill major requirements, although it may satisfy a broad sectors of human inquiry requirement (see below).

A student's ability to demonstrate a well-developed, confident identity as a good writer is accomplished through completion of: WRI 102/Academic Writing; FSP; a second or third year writing intensive course in the major or liberal learning; and a capstone or other fourth year writing intensive course in the major. However, students may be exempted from WRI 102 if they have earned scores of 580 and above on both the SAT Critical Reading test and on the SAT Mathematics test, through Advanced Placement tests, or through the College's placement process.

Achieving speaking proficiency is measured by a student's ability to demonstrate a well-developed, confident identity as a good speaker, and is the responsibility of each major program.

A level of second language proficiency enabling students to access perspectives and information from communities other than their own is met by completing the third introductory second-language course—or testing out of it. Proficiency at the third-semester level in a second language is required for all programs in the School of Culture and Society and in selected programs in the School of the Arts and Communication and the School of Business. Proficiency at either the second- or third-semester level (depending on program) is required in the School of Science. Consult an advisor for information about specific program requirements.

Information literacy is measured by a student's ability to determine the need for and to gain access to information, as well as to develop the means of evaluating and using it with proficiency. It is accomplished through an on-line, non-credit course required as a co-requisite with First Seminar or as a stand-alone requirement for transfer students. Students must demonstrate this proficiency prior to graduation, but are encouraged to do so as early as possible.

## Liberal Learning-2

### II. Civic Responsibilities:

Students should have an understanding of the nature of race and ethnicity, gender, and global communities, and the impact of each on our lives in the contemporary world. Also, students should seek to sustain and advance the communities in which they live by engaging in an informed and academically based service experience. The fulfillment of these goals is achieved by completing designated major or liberal learning courses or through an approved program or equivalent sustained experiences. No single course, program, or sustained experience may satisfy more than two of the four civic responsibility categories. A list of courses meeting the civic responsibilities requirement can be found online at the [Liberal Learning website](#).

The four areas of civic responsibility are:

- understanding the nature of race and ethnicity
- understanding the nature and impact of gender
- achieving global awareness
- community-engaged learning

### III. Broad Sectors of Human Inquiry—Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and History, Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning:

This element of liberal learning develops students' abilities to understand and advance their knowledge in three broad sectors of human inquiry: Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and History, and Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning.

There are three paths from which students can choose to complete this goal:

- **Option A: Designated Interdisciplinary Concentrations or Second Majors**  
Interdisciplinary concentrations consist of six to eight courses addressing a common theme. Courses comprising a concentration must include at least two of the three broad sectors of human inquiry, with no more than four courses from the same broad sector. When an interdisciplinary concentration does not include two courses from each broad sector, additional courses, as necessary, from the appropriate sectors must be completed. Every student must also complete at least one course each in quantitative reasoning and natural science with laboratory. When two additional courses are required from the same sector, students must select courses with different prefixes.

Students can also satisfy their breadth requirement by successfully completing a second major, provided they also successfully complete at least two courses from each of the broad sectors. As above, every student must complete at least one course each in quantitative reasoning and natural science with laboratory, and when two additional courses, beyond those included in the two majors, are required from the same sector, students must select courses with different prefixes. Similarly, if a student needs only one additional course from a sector, its prefix must be different from the other course.

The concentrations listed below are currently available under Option A. Complete descriptions for each can be found in the section of this Bulletin for "College-Wide Programs: Interdisciplinary Concentrations" as well as on the [liberal learning website](#).

African Studies  
African Diaspora Studies  
African American Studies  
Asian Studies  
Caribbean Studies  
Classical and Early Modern British Literary Studies  
Classical Studies  
Cognitive Science  
Environmental Studies  
European Literary Studies

### Liberal Learning-3

Gender and Violence  
Gender, Nation, and Democracy  
Health Communication  
International Political Economy  
Law and Society  
Religious Studies  
Sexualities  
Society, Ethics, and Technology  
Women in Learning and Leadership  
Women's and Gender Studies

Students completing Option A concentrations must complete an appropriate form and submit it to the Office of Records and Registration. Forms may be downloaded from each concentration's website or obtained at the Office of Records and Registrations.

- **Option B: Self-designed Interdisciplinary Concentrations**

Students are invited to create their own concentrations that address the same three broad sectors. A student must secure the sponsorship of at least two faculty members who teach in disciplines included in the proposed concentration. The student must then complete the Interdisciplinary Concentration form (as in Option A, above) and submit it to the Office of Records and Registration. All other provisions related to sector requirements as described in Option A, above, apply.

- **Option C: Breadth Distribution**

Each of the three broad sectors of human inquiry is sub-divided into two domains as follows:

1. Arts and Humanities
  - a. Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts
  - b. World Views and Ways of Knowing
2. Social Sciences and History
  - a. Behavioral, Social, or Cultural Perspectives
  - b. Social Change in Historical Perspective
3. Natural Science and Quantitative Reasoning
  - a. Natural Science
  - b. Quantitative Reasoning

Students satisfy Option C by completing three courses in each broad sector, with at least one course from each domain; nine courses altogether.

All First Seminars are designated as meeting one of the six domains and, therefore, fulfill one breadth requirement. Furthermore, in satisfying the natural sciences requirement, students must take at least one laboratory course. When two natural science courses are taken, they may be in either one or two disciplines (unless otherwise specified by major requirements).

Courses taken for major or minor requirements may be used to fulfill Option C requirements as appropriate. Also, courses taken to meet the broad sectors of human inquiry requirements, including First Seminar, regardless of option, may also fulfill civic responsibilities requirements, as indicated.

*See also the section of this Bulletin on "College-Wide Programs: Interdisciplinary Courses" (IDS)*