

**VASSAR COLLEGE**

**THE 2024/25 FIRST-YEAR HANDBOOK**  
**A HANDBOOK FOR THE CLASS OF 2028**

## To the Class of 2028

In a few short weeks, you will join a college community of other students, faculty, and administrators eager to welcome you to Vassar. Planning for your academic and co-curricular success at Vassar in the midst of this is also important to us. No doubt, you have already begun reflecting on your own intellectual and personal goals for the next four years at Vassar. To be prepared to meet them, you will need to think through, plan, and carry out an academic program grounded in the broad tradition of liberal education.

The Dean of the College division is committed to helping you prepare and support you in meeting all of your goals. The materials in this book will help you make good use of the time between now and when you arrive on campus in August. As you read and work through them, I encourage you to be in touch with any relevant offices to ask any questions or to ask for additional support.

You will also find instructions for pre-registering for your fall semester courses. Please read and consider this material carefully. We encourage you to think about it while pre-registering for classes and preparing the Statement of Academic Interests, which the Dean of First-Year Students has requested you send before you arrive on campus. Your understanding of the materials here, the Vassar College catalog, and your Statement of Academic Interests will provide the basis for the critical discussions that you will have with your faculty pre-major advisor, your house fellow, and the Dean of First-Year students when you arrive on campus in August.

We look forward to welcoming you to campus and to facilitating your smooth and enjoyable transition into the Vassar community. Please be on the lookout for additional guidance and recommendations from the College in the coming weeks on how to best pack and prepare for your arrival on campus in August. I look forward to meeting each of you during your time at the College as we forge ahead in the creation of a collective and beloved community.

Carlos Alamo-Pastrana

Dean of the College and Professor of Sociology

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## CONTENTS

<b>THE VASSAR FIRST YEAR</b>	<b>5</b>
<a href="#">General Education: Student Learning Goals</a>	5
<a href="#">New Student Orientation</a>	6
<a href="#">How to Use This Handbook</a>	7
<b>ACADEMIC, RESIDENTIAL LIFE, AND EXTRACURRICULAR RESOURCES</b>	<b>8</b>
<a href="#">The Dean of First-Year Students</a>	8
<a href="#">Faculty Advisors</a>	8
<a href="#">Libraries</a>	9
<a href="#">The Learning, Teaching, and Research Center</a>	9
<a href="#">Community-Engaged Learning</a>	10
<a href="#">Career Education</a>	11
<a href="#">Associate Dean of the College for Student Living and Wellness</a>	12
<a href="#">Student Support Network</a>	12
<a href="#">The Office of Residential Life</a>	13
<a href="#">House Advisors</a>	13
<a href="#">House Fellows</a>	13
<a href="#">House Student Advisors</a>	13
<a href="#">Student Fellows</a>	14
<a href="#">Community Fellows</a>	14
<a href="#">House Fellow Interns</a>	14
<a href="#">House Events Officers</a>	14
<a href="#">Counseling Service</a>	15
<a href="#">Office of Health Promotion and Education</a>	16
<a href="#">Case Management, Advocacy, Resources and Education         (CARE Office)</a>	16
<a href="#">The Support, Advocacy, and Violence Prevention Office</a>	17
<a href="#">Health Service</a>	18
<a href="#">Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity</a>	18

<a href="#"><u>The Office of Religious and Spiritual Life and Contemplative Practices</u></a>	19
<a href="#"><u>Office of Student Growth and Engagement</u></a>	20
<a href="#"><u>Student Employment</u></a>	22
<a href="#"><u>Athletic and Physical Education</u></a>	22
<b>ACADEMIC INFORMATION</b>	<b>24</b>
<a href="#"><u>Graduation Requirements</u></a>	24
<a href="#"><u>Pre-Matriculation Credit</u></a>	26
<a href="#"><u>Exam-Based Pre-Matriculation Credit</u></a>	26
<a href="#"><u>Credit for College Work Done Prior to Matriculation at Vassar</u></a>	27
<a href="#"><u>Advanced Course Placement</u></a>	27
<a href="#"><u>Preparation for Teacher Certification</u></a>	28
<a href="#"><u>Preparation for Law School</u></a>	28
<a href="#"><u>Preparation for Medical School</u></a>	29
<a href="#"><u>Preparation for Education Abroad</u></a>	29
<b>REGISTRATION FOR COURSES</b>	<b>30</b>
<a href="#"><u>Guidelines for Course Selection To Prospective Science Majors</u></a>	31
<a href="#"><u>Yearlong Courses</u></a>	34
<a href="#"><u>About Grades</u></a>	34
<a href="#"><u>Statement on Assessment</u></a>	36
<a href="#"><u>Now It's Up to You!</u></a>	36
<a href="#"><u>A Note about Ask Banner</u></a>	36
<a href="#"><u>A Note about Degree Works</u></a>	36
<a href="#"><u>First-Year Writing Seminars</u></a>	37

<b>DEPARTMENTS OF INSTRUCTION AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION</b>	<b>94</b>
<a href="#">The VCard</a>	94
<a href="#">Banks</a>	95
<a href="#">Mailroom Hours and Services</a>	96
<a href="#">Transportation and Automobile Regulations</a>	97
<a href="#">Important Telephone Numbers</a>	99
<a href="#">Quick Reference Web Addresses</a>	99

# THE VASSAR FIRST YEAR

As you begin your first year of college, please consider the values of the community you are about to join. The Vassar catalog states, "Vassar College seeks to sustain a community of special character in which people of divergent views and backgrounds come together to study and live in the proud tradition of a residential liberal arts college. Vassar students, working closely with the faculty, enjoy the freedom to explore their intellectual and artistic passions, to develop their powers of reason and imagination through the process of analysis and synthesis, to effectively express their unique points of view, to challenge and rethink their own and others' assumptions, and to struggle with complex questions that sometimes reveal conflicting truths." Vassar has set high goals, believing that its students are capable and eager to take on the challenge. Vassar places considerable faith and control in the hands of its students and trusts them to find their own way of taking the liberal arts education offered at Vassar and making it uniquely their own. Given Vassar's **rich and varied curriculum**, your education depends on the care with which you plan your academic program. Your course selections should reflect your interests and abilities but also acknowledge that **your first year of study is a time for intellectual exploration**. We hope that in planning your fall semester courses, especially in working with your pre-major advisor, you **keep an open mind**, remain flexible, and identify numerous alternative course options that **take advantage of the many possibilities Vassar offers you**.

## General Education: Student Learning Goals

The faculty of Vassar College has recently approved the General Education Student Learning Goals to help facilitate discussions amongst students, faculty, and the college community regarding the meaning and goals of a liberal arts education at Vassar.

These goals are not fulfilled by any one course, department, or division but rather through the entirety of a student's education at Vassar. They are meant to be interpreted broadly to recognize the various approaches of the college's numerous disciplines and the ability of Vassar students to make independent decisions with the guidance of their faculty advisors and mentors. You are encouraged to strive for significant achievement in these four areas throughout your time at Vassar. However, we understand that students will not achieve all these goals in the same way or to the same extent. The learning goals listed below are helpful for pre-major advising conversations and assist students in planning their comprehensive liberal education.

## General Education Learning Goals

(adopted 2/3/21)

### **Independent Thinking, Creativity and Curiosity:**

#### **Students will**

- Conduct original independent research using appropriate sources.
- Identify problems or issues for which there are complex, ambiguous, or contradictory answers that lead to creative outcomes or innovative solutions.

### **Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning:**

#### **Students will**

- Construct, analyze, interpret, and evaluate subject matter using quantitative techniques.
- Discern the kinds of questions that can be effectively addressed through quantitative methods.
- Demonstrate scientific reasoning by applying inductive and/or deductive analysis to evaluate a hypothesis.

### **Written Communication:**

#### **Students will**

- Construct a clear persuasive written argument.
- Use appropriate conventions for different audiences.

### **Intercultural Competency and Language Proficiency:**

#### **Students will**

- Demonstrate intercultural competency.
- Demonstrate proficiency in communication skills in a language other than English.

### **Diverse Ideas and Perspectives:**

#### **Students will**

- Demonstrate the ability to explain and reflect on important issues within one's own social and cultural context and those of others.
- Engage with ideas, beliefs, behaviors, values, or views that differ from one's own.
- Function effectively and work collaboratively in diverse groups.

## New Student Orientation

Classes are scheduled to begin this year on Tuesday, September 3. All new students are expected to **arrive at Vassar on Monday, August 26**, the first day of New Student Orientation. A detailed schedule for this year's orientation activities may be found online on the [Dean of First-Year Students](#) website.

The activities planned for the days and weeks before classes begin serve various social and academic needs. During the summer, academic advising and class registration will take place at different times and will be completed during Orientation Week. Other activities during New Student Orientation on campus include general assemblies, residence house meetings, and discussion groups designed to ease your transition to college life and inform you of the rights and responsibilities of being a Vassar community member.

## How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is designed to help you in your orientation to Vassar. Here, you will find the academic information you will need to register for classes, including descriptions of Vassar's requirements and statements by academic departments and programs that will aid you in choosing your classes. You should read through the "**Academic Information**" and "**Departments of Instruction and Multidisciplinary Programs**" sections to familiarize yourself with the **great range of choices** before you. The "Registration for Courses" section will give you more specific information about the process by which you will pre-register for your courses over the summer. General advising information will be available on the New Students website and Moodle (Vassar's Learning Management System). Please check them regularly for new additions. Once you come to campus, you will have the opportunity to attend the many advising sessions that are a part of orientation, and you will meet twice with your faculty advisor during orientation to add to and revise your course selections. Final registration will take place on Friday, August 30.

Only one requirement must be met in your first year: every new student is required to complete at least **one First-Year Writing Seminar**. Please consult the "First-Year Writing Seminars" section of this handbook for the 2024/25 offerings. The **Vassar catalog**, found online, is the primary source for all information on the college's academic organization, graduation requirements, course offerings, and so forth. If questions arise as you read what follows, please also consult the catalog.

The next section of this handbook, "Academic, Residential Life, and Extracurricular Resources," contains a listing of the people and offices you might turn to with any questions. Additional information about student life at Vassar, including a list of student organizations sponsored by the Vassar Student Association, can be found in the College Regulations or Student Handbook, available online. You may always call the Office of the Dean of First-Year Students at 845-437-5258 with any questions.

Remember to **complete your Statement of Academic Interests online by July 1**. I will use this information to assign you a faculty pre-major advisor.

I look forward to meeting you this fall.

Lioba Gerhardi

*Dean of First-Year Students and Visiting Assistant Professor in German Studies*



# ACADEMIC, RESIDENTIAL LIFE, AND EXTRACURRICULAR RESOURCES

“Can I take that 200-level course on Asian-American literature?”-“What should I do if I’m running a fever and can’t attend class?”-“My roommate and I don’t seem to have hit it off. Can we switch roommates?”

Questions of all kinds arise as we navigate a new environment. Answers are readily available from various resources; the information below will help you determine where to turn with a particular question.

## The Dean of First-Year Students

The Dean of First-Year Students is a member of the faculty at Vassar College and is responsible for advising and guiding all first-year students on academic matters. She oversees academic regulations that affect new students and serves on several faculty and administrative committees that work toward the welfare of Vassar students. The Dean also assigns faculty pre-major advisors and co-chairs the New Student Orientation Committee.

If you experience any personal, family, or medical difficulties that could affect your academic performance, the Dean of First-Year Students will work closely with you to help you navigate the college’s resources and support systems. She will advise you on the various options available for some form of academic relief.

Any first-year student who needs to be away from campus due to an illness or family emergency or is considering a leave of absence or withdrawal from Vassar should consult Lioba Gerhardi, the Dean of First-Year Students.

Her office is located at the Office of the Dean of Studies (Main N-128) and is open on weekdays from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. You can schedule an appointment by calling 845-437-5258 or emailing [deanoffirstyear@vassar.edu](mailto:deanoffirstyear@vassar.edu).

## Faculty Advisors

The Dean of First-Year Students assigns you a faculty pre-major advisor based on the interests that you list on the [Statement of Academic Interests form](#), which you need to **complete online by July 1**. (When you declare a major, most likely in your sophomore year, you will be re-assigned to an advisor who teaches in the department or program of your major.)

You will have your first meeting with your pre-major advisor and fellow advisees on Tuesday, August 27, to get to know each other and raise any questions you may have. On Thursday, August 29, you will have an individual half-hour appointment with your advisor to finalize your course selections before registration. Throughout the year, you will need to meet or correspond

with your advisor to obtain approval to add or drop a course, to elect a course under the non-recorded option (NRO), to pre-register for the following semester, or to request any special permission. Your pre-major advisor is also a valuable resource for general information about the college and the curriculum. You should take some time to get to know your advisor and let them get to know you.

At Vassar, there are many people available for academic advice, but you need to take the initiative to seek out the specific information you need. While your pre-major advisor can help you coordinate your individual program, no single faculty member can be expected to know everything about Vassar's vast and varied curriculum. If you need specific information about a course or a department, you should speak to the appropriate professor or department chair. Individual instructors and department or program representatives are available in their offices during the semester's initial days and as the term progresses.

After orientation, it is your responsibility to schedule all appointments with your advisor. Know your advisor's office hours and arrange to meet with your advisor before all pertinent deadlines. Most faculty members can be reached via email. If you cannot reach your advisor, instructor, or department chair, please contact the department assistant to leave a message that you wish to make an appointment.

The Dean of First-Year Students can answer more general questions about college policies and procedures and your overall curricular planning throughout your years of study.

## **Libraries**

As a Vassar student, you have access to fantastic library collections: books and journals, online databases, sound recordings and music scores, films, rare books and manuscripts, and unique digital collections. Vassar's librarians are here to help you navigate the many resources and services that are available to you so that you can enjoy all that our libraries have to offer. Visit [here](#) to email or chat with a librarian or to schedule a research consultation.

The Main Library also houses a 24-hour study space, the Design and Collaboration Studio, Archives and Special Collections, the Writing Center, and the Quantitative Reasoning Center. The Art Library is located between the Main Library and Taylor Hall, while the Music Library can be found in Skinner Hall.

## **The Learning, Teaching, and Research Center**

The Learning, Teaching, and Research Center (LTRC) offers a coordinated set of activities—workshops, programs, lectures, and small group consultations—that seek to bind the values of equity, inclusion, and belonging within the ongoing work of deepening faculty and student capacity for effective teaching and transformative learning.

The LTRC connects students and faculty with one another across disciplines, recognizing that both students and teachers are involved in learning, leading, and scholarship. The center's mission includes helping students realize their academic potential and achieve their educational goals, as well as supporting faculty in their professional development.

The LTRC houses thriving peer-tutoring programs in writing, in quantitative reasoning, and is working to develop a program of peer support for core academic skills. LTRC staff also design and lead faculty development seminars informed by their work with students and encourage faculty to see how their research informs their teaching and vice versa.

For more information, please visit the [LTRC](#) website.

## Community-Engaged Learning

The Office of Community-Engaged Learning (OCEL) aims to build long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships with community organizations in Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, and the greater Hudson Valley. By developing and centering partnerships, the OCEL provides students with the opportunity to learn alongside community partner organizations and make real-world connections to enhance their academic experiences.

Community Engaged Learning (CEL) is a community-based educational opportunity aimed to enhance learning through employing pedagogical strategies of structured critical reflection, dialogic engagement, integration of academic learning goals, and connection to clearly articulated community-desired outcomes and impact. In the CEL experience, students learn more about social issues, work alongside community partners, combine their off-campus learning with guided reflection under the mentorship of a faculty sponsor, and participate in critical community-engaged learning on-campus workshops.

Students are eligible to receive either 0.5 unit (40 hours of community-based work and 30 hours of academic work) or 1.0 unit of academic credit (80 hours of community-based work and 60 hours of academic work) in the department of their faculty sponsor. Community-engaged learning is supervised by a faculty member who assists the student in developing an academic framework to support the community-based experience, evaluates the merit of the proposed community-engaged learning, determines the amount of credit given, and decides upon the academic requirements for the awarding of credit.

Students are required to meet with the OCEL to discuss their academic and community engagement interests. The OCEL will connect students to local community partner organizations. If a student is interested in connecting with an organization outside of our local and long-standing community-based partner organizations, students will be required to submit a proposal to the OCEL for review.

Students are required to attend the OCEL's pedagogical workshops grounded in critical community-engaged learning and ethical and responsible community engagement practices.

Students, faculty sponsors, and community-based supervisors will co-create a Community-Engaged Learning agreement (CELA). The CELA mirrors best practices of supporting strong partnerships, critical reflection, and a meaningful and high-impact CEL experience. In the CELA, students will articulate their interests and learning goals and work with their supervisors and faculty sponsors to think holistically about how the community-based experience weaves into their academic journey at Vassar.

All CEL is ungraded (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory) and can be done during the academic year or in the summer. Students may not apply for retroactive community-engaged learning credit. CEL is open to second semester first years, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Students can register for CEL during pre-registration or the add/drop period. Please see the academic calendar for dates. Students should also consult their academic advisors and majors requirements prior to adding CEL.

For more information about the range of Community-Engaged Learning opportunities, please visit the Office of Community-Engaged Learning in Main N-165, phone 845-437-5280, or visit the Community-Engaged Learning website. For more information about the process, current opportunities, and forms, please visit the [OCEL](#) website.

## Career Education

The Center for Career Education (CCE), located on the first floor of Main Building, south wing, S-170, supports students as they explore their interests, define their career goals, and seek their next opportunity for personal growth and professional development. The CCE houses a variety of resources for locating summer and postgraduate opportunities and making connections between your college experience and the world of work. Our services and programs focus on the following areas:

- Supporting career exploration and self-assessment (defining your interests, skills, values, and goals)
- Educating about internship and job search documents, processes, and strategies
- Providing resources for locating internships and summer jobs, as well as post-graduate opportunities
- Creating opportunities for students to engage with alums for career connections and mentorship
- Supporting the graduate school, law school, and medical school research and application process
- Supporting students in their pursuit of Vassar funding and fellowships as well as nationally competitive fellowship opportunities

Because life-work planning is a continual process, we offer assistance throughout your college years as well as after you graduate. We encourage first-year students to engage with the Center for Career Education early and often in their time at Vassar. Whether you are thinking about a summer internship, deciding on a major, or simply exploring options to gain experience, you can

use the CCE's staff, resources, and extensive network of alums to assist with your plans. Check out [Handshake](#), the CCE's internship/job database and event calendar.

Appointments with our friendly staff are available Monday through Friday and may be scheduled via Handshake or by stopping by the office (located in Main S-170). Same-day drop-in appointments are available Monday through Friday, 1:30-4:00 pm when classes are in session.

For more information, visit the [CCE](#) website, email [CCE@vassar.edu](mailto:CCE@vassar.edu), or call (845) 437-5285.

## **Associate Dean of the College for Student Living and Wellness**

The Associate Dean of the College for Student Living and Wellness oversees several aspects of the non-academic lives of Vassar students, including the Counseling Service, Health Service, Health Promotion and Education, The Offices of Residential Life, Care Management, Advocacy, Resources (CARE), and Support Advocacy and Violence Prevention (SAVP). Their primary responsibility is to ensure that Vassar students have access to the resources they need to thrive personally and academically.

As an advocate for students, the Associate Dean regularly meets with the student services directors reporting to them. Together, they establish the goals and priorities of each office. The Associate Dean also tri-chairs the New Student Orientation Committee with the Dean of First-Year Students and the Associate Dean of the College for Student Growth and Engagement. They oversee the community expectations system and work to support new students as they transition to college life.

Overall, the Associate Dean of the College for Student Living and Wellness is here to support students in any way they can. They are committed to providing a welcoming and comforting environment for all students and encourage anyone who needs support or assistance to reach out to any of the services under their purview.

For more information, visit the [Office of Student Living and Wellness](#) website.

## **Student Support Network**

The Associate Dean also convenes weekly Student Support Network (SSN) meetings to coordinate helping resources for students whose behavior indicates they may be in serious trouble. The core SSN group comprises the Associate Dean of the College for Student Living and Wellness, the Dean of Studies, the Director of Residential Education, the Director of CARE, and the Director of Counseling Service. Other administrators are invited as appropriate.

The SSN members may share information about students who appear to be in distress or crisis. The group then determines how best to support the student or students. The Associate Dean and

their team understand that confidentiality is crucial. Therefore, confidential information is not shared by the Counseling Service, Health Service, or the Director of Health Promotion and Education.

## **The Office of Residential Life**

The Office of Residential Life coordinates all aspects of the residential experience at Vassar. The Residential Life staff is responsible for community development, student leadership, room assignments, residential house furnishings and equipment, health and safety in the halls, and the development and implementation of college policies. Members of the Residential Life staff can be contacted at the central office in Main C-120 or by telephone at 845-437-5860.

For more information, please visit the [Office of Residential Life](#) website.

## **House Advisors**

House Advisors are administrators serving as professional liaisons between the Houses and the Office of Residential Life. House Advisors, like House Fellows, live in the Houses amongst students and are dedicated full-time to the holistic support of all residents. Typically, they hold master's degrees in the field of higher education administration and/or college student development. House Advisors supervise the House Student Advisors, Student Fellows, and Community Fellows. They advise the House Team, adjudicate student conduct meetings, serve as the Administrator-on-Call for emergency response, develop educational/social/recreational programming, serve as facilitators of our residential curriculum (H.O.M.E.), mediate conflicts, and more.

## **House Fellows**

House Fellows are faculty members who live in the residential houses. They function as members of the residential community who offer perspective, build relationships with students, and counsel. House Fellows also serve to broaden and extend the contact between faculty and students in informal and non-academic areas. House Fellow Interns are student leaders selected to support the programmatic endeavors of the house fellows in each house.

## **House Student Advisors**

In each house, a House Student Advisor, usually a member of the junior or senior class, works along with the House Advisor and House Team. They have been a member of the House Team before and give guidance to the Student Fellows, Community Fellows, House Fellow Interns, and House Events Officer. They provide advice, suggestions, and additional support for current House Team members and are a visible leader in the House for all residents. House Student Advisors are involved in the selection, training, and advising of the Student Fellows and Community Fellows in their building, and they facilitate weekly Student Fellow meetings in their House.

## **Student Fellows**

Student Fellows serve as peer mentors to a group of first-year students and assist them holistically in adjusting to the academic, social, and personal challenges and triumphs a student may encounter in their first year at college. Student Fellows are assigned to a cohort of first-year students who live near them in the residential house. There are also Student Fellows for new transfer, visiting, and exchange students in Cushing House. They serve as guides throughout New Student Orientation, as well as act as a consistent source of support throughout a student's entire first year at Vassar. They are trained in referring students to helpful resources, empathic listening techniques, peer support, community development, conflict resolution, and more.

## **Community Fellows**

Community Fellows are peer advisors to returning sophomore, junior, and senior students in the Houses, specifically focusing on outreach, advocacy, and programming. They are supervised by House Advisors and advised by House Student Advisors. The major role of a Community Fellow as a peer resource is to be readily available and visible within the House. Community Fellows get to know their residents personally to understand their various needs and interests, and to create a positive community atmosphere. One of their major responsibilities is putting on programming for their residents to create a welcoming environment for all students. They also serve as facilitators of the residential curriculum (H.O.M.E.).

## **House Fellow Interns**

House Fellow Interns work with the live-in faculty members of the House. House Fellow Interns build bridges between academics and lived experiences by organizing unique intellectual and social programs for their house community. They often find opportunities to connect students to the larger campus and surrounding communities, such as the Hudson Valley and New York City. House Fellow and House Fellow Interns work hard to show how there are just as many learning opportunities outside the classroom as during classes.

## **House Events Officers**

Each House elects one House Events Officer through the student government, VSA. The House Events Officer collaborates closely with the Office of Residential Life and House Team while also serving on the VSA. House Events Officers will lead programming efforts to create opportunities within the House for students to connect with the House Team and one another. They also facilitate weekly House Team meetings for their House.

For more information on Residential Life, please visit the [Office of Residential Life](#) website.



## Counseling Service

The Counseling Service provides a variety of services to help students and the campus community handle the challenges associated with academics, college life, and personal development. Services include short-term individual, couple, and group counseling, walk-in-clinic same-day appointments, workshops, crisis intervention, educational programs, consultation, assessment, and referral to off-campus services. Services are free for students. The Counseling Service welcomes all students and embraces a philosophy of diversity.

Counselors are trained mental health professionals who work with students to explore personal problems and concerns in a secure and private setting. Students come to the Counseling Service for a variety of reasons, including relationship problems with parents, peers, or partners; depression; anxiety; alcohol and other drug use and abuse; coming out and transition issues; campus climate concerns; identity concerns; stress; concerns about academic progress or direction; or assistance in planning for the future.

Counselors sometimes refer students to resources outside of the Vassar community, depending on the student's needs and the Counseling Service's limitations. Students referred for treatment off campus may use their health insurance to defray the cost. Off-campus services are the responsibility of the student and/or the student's family. Students from low-income backgrounds can access the Mental Health and Wellness Fund through the CARE Office to assist in paying for co-payments for off-campus appointments.

The Counseling Service's consulting psychiatrist is available for limited psychiatric services for students who are receiving counseling at the Counseling Service by referral from a counselor. If continuing psychiatric services are required, a referral is made to a private off-campus psychiatrist.

Confidentiality is of the highest priority at the Counseling Service and is strictly maintained within specific legal limits. Counseling records are separate from academic and medical records at the college and are not available to college offices outside of the Counseling Service. Since email is not a secure medium and confidentiality of email cannot be guaranteed, the Counseling Service recommends that you consider this when communicating about matters of a personal or confidential nature.

Please also refer to the [Counseling Service](#) website for additional information and for self-help resources.

The Counseling Service, located in Metcalf House, is open Monday through Friday, 9:00 am–5:00 pm during the academic year and closes during breaks and the summer. Call 845-437-5700 to schedule an appointment.

If you are in crisis during office hours, call 845-437-5700 and explain that you need to speak to a counselor urgently. A counselor-on-call is also available 24/7 for counseling support and crisis



intervention and can be accessed by calling the Campus Response Center at 845-437-7333 and requesting to be connected with the counselor-on-call.

## Office of Health Promotion and Education

The Office of Health Promotion and Education believes that health is a vital part of learning. We believe students' ability to thrive academically and personally depends on their state of mind, body, and overall well-being. We work to provide a campus environment and a range of educational programs where students are able to make decisions that sustain and enhance their health, prevent disease, and reduce risky behaviors. We are committed to empowering students to make informed decisions in a wide range of health-related fields, including mental health, sexual health, exercise and nutrition, and alcohol and other drugs, while respecting their choices without judgment.

The Office of Health Promotion and Education is located in Main Building South 180 (Live Well Lounge). The office is open from 9:00 am-5:00 pm during the academic year and can be reached at 845-437-7769. Students are welcome to stop by or email us at [apesavento@vassar.edu](mailto:apesavento@vassar.edu) for information about health and wellness topics, or to schedule a one-on-one consultation with Andrea Pesavento, the Director of Health Promotion and Education.

For more information, please visit the [Office of Health Promotion and Education](#) website.

## Case Coordination, Advocacy, Resources and Education (CARE Office)

The CARE Office (Care Coordination, Advocacy, Resources, and Education) at Vassar provides compassionate and individualized Care Coordination support to any student going through a challenging time or experiencing distress. We believe that holistic support and connection to resources on campus and in the community are essential to a student's overall wellness and their ability to thrive both academically and personally. We are committed to empowering students to attend to their needs holistically and access support services by providing a safe space focused on supportive care, advocacy, resources, and education. We provide support for a variety of needs, including difficulties adjusting to campus, navigating multiple offices on campus, connecting to resources on and off campus, as well as emotional support. Although Care Coordination is not counseling, it works closely with Counseling and other offices to ensure students are receiving the care and support they need. If your student is experiencing a challenging time or if they would like to discuss resources available to them both on-campus and off-campus, they can contact the CARE Office at [care@vassar.edu](mailto:care@vassar.edu) to schedule an appointment.

The CARE Office is located in Main S180. The sign on the glass door is the Live Well Lounge. The office is open from 9:00 am-5:00 pm during the academic year. Students are welcome to stop by or email [care@vassar.edu](mailto:care@vassar.edu) for information about services offered or to schedule a one-on-one consultation. For more information, please visit the [CARE Office](#) website.

## The Support, Advocacy, and Violence Prevention Office

The Support, Advocacy, and Violence Prevention (SAVP) Office provides individualized support and advocacy to survivors of sexual violence, intimate partner violence, relationship abuse, dating violence, or sexual harassment, past or present. The SAVP Office also provides support to friends, family, or other direct supporters of someone impacted by interpersonal violence. In addition to providing support and advocacy, the SAVP Office oversees campus prevention programming, including bystander intervention training, consent education, healthy relationship education, community awareness, and other workshops for students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

The SAVP Office is staffed by two full-time employees, the SAVP Director and the SAVP Program Coordinator. The office also oversees SAVP Advocates, who are trained Vassar faculty, administrators, and staff who are available 24/7 for support. The SAVP Director, SAVP Program Coordinator, and SAVP Advocates serve as private resources to support members of the Vassar community who are survivors or who are supporters of survivors. As private resources, advocates do not release identifying information about anyone who accesses services unless there is an immediate concern about the safety of an individual or the campus. The SAVP Director, SAVP Program Coordinator, and SAVP Advocates are required to maintain depersonalized information for federal Clery data, but this information does not include students' identifying information. The SAVP Office coordinates prevention education for the campus community throughout the year. The SAVP Director, SAVP Program Coordinator, and student employees in the office collaborate with a variety of on- and off-campus offices, as well as student organizations, to develop and implement training and violence prevention initiatives. This includes training for house teams, student-athletes, student organizations, first-year students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

SAVP Advocates can be reached 24/7 by calling the Campus Response Center at 845-437-7333 and asking to speak with the SAVP Advocate on call.

To schedule an appointment for support and advocacy, you can email [savp@vassar.edu](mailto:savp@vassar.edu).

To request a workshop or training for your student organization, office, department, or other group, you can email [savp@vassar.edu](mailto:savp@vassar.edu) to be put in touch with our programming team.

The SAVP Office is located on the first floor of Main Building, in office S185. For more information, please visit the [SAVP Office](#) website.

## Health Service

The Health Service department, located in Baldwin House, provides medical and nursing care by qualified personnel, including physician assistants, nurse practitioners, nurses, and medical assistants under the guidance of a supervising physician. Health Service hours are 9:00 am–5:00 pm Monday through Friday, and 12:00pm–4:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday during the academic year.

Services offered include treatment of acute illness or injury, chronic disease management, gynecological care, gender-affirming care, travel health consultations, sports physicals, medical evaluations for disordered eating conditions, immunizations, allergy injections, and lab draws. Routine primary care is offered with referral to local specialists or hospitals when needed. Reproductive services offered on-campus include contraceptive counseling, long-acting reversible contraceptive placement and removal, HIV prophylaxis consultation and management, and routine sexual health testing. Health promotion and disease prevention are emphasized through a variety of on-campus programs.

Appointments can be scheduled during office hours by calling 845-437-5800. Select services are available through self-scheduling on the patient portal. Emergencies and urgent concerns can be seen on a walk-in basis when the Health Service is open. When the Health Service is closed, students may call the Campus Response Center (CRC) at 845-437-7333 for emergencies or 845-437-5221 for non-emergent concerns. The CRC will dispatch the Vassar Emergency Medical Technician and Vassar College Emergency Medical Services. A member of the Health Service medical staff is always on call outside of routine clinic hours.

For more information, please visit the [Health Services](#) website or email [health@vassar.edu](mailto:health@vassar.edu).

Enrolled students can register for the [Health Services Patient Portal](#).

## Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (AEO)

Many Vassar students need accommodations or support services because of a diagnosed learning difference, ADHD, chronic medical condition, vision or hearing loss, mobility or orthopedic impairment, psychological diagnosis, or because they are in recovery from substance abuse. The Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (AEO) is committed to helping coordinate and provide necessary accommodations, auxiliary aids, and services to qualified students with documented disabilities to ensure equal access to and opportunity for full participation in the academic and residential life of the college.

Students in need of disability-related accommodations or services may self-identify at any time to the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity. To receive academic accommodations at

the start of the fall semester, please register with the office as early as June 15, 2024, and throughout the summer. To receive housing accommodations prior to housing placement of first-years, students must register and submit documentation no later than June 15, 2024. Students must provide the college with enough time to understand their need for accommodations or services, review disability documentation that supports the request for accommodation, work to put in place approved accommodations, and, if necessary, identify alternatives or make adjustments if the requested accommodation is not appropriate, creates an undue burden, or would result in a substantial modification to an essential requirement of a course, program, or activity. Accommodations are effective from the date of approval and cannot be put in place retroactively.

All accommodation and service decisions are based on the nature of the student's disability, supporting documentation, and current needs as they relate to the specific requirements of the course, program, or activity. Commonly offered accommodations and support services include, but are not limited to:

- Exam accommodations (e.g., extended time on scheduled exams, reduced-distraction test environment, use of a computer for essay exams, etc.)
- Alternative print formats (e.g., audio files, e-text, Braille)
- Peer notetaker service
- Modified course load
- Housing (e.g., single room, accessible room, air conditioner, ESA)
- Meal plan accommodations
- Assistive listening devices, remote closed captioning, sign language interpreters

Please contact the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity to learn more about our services and inform us of your accommodation needs or concerns. We regularly schedule phone calls, video conferencing, and in-person meetings with incoming students throughout the summer.

The office is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 am–5:00 pm during the academic year and by appointment during the summer. For more information, please email [aeo@vassar.edu](mailto:aeo@vassar.edu), call 845-437-7584 or visit the [AEO Office](#) website.

## **The Office of Religious and Spiritual Life and Contemplative Practices**

The Office of Religious and Spiritual Life and Contemplative Practices (RSLCP) provides programming and support for eleven different student religious groups at Vassar, supports a wide range of religious and civic communities and initiatives on campus, and plays an important role as a college liaison to the mid-Hudson Valley community. RSLCP staff members are available for pastoral counseling and spiritual guidance for any concern or question students may have. The RSLCP staff currently includes an associate dean, a director for Jewish Life (and assistant director in RSLCP), an advisor for Muslim Student Life, affiliate advisors for our Episcopal, Roman

Catholic, and Chabad Jewish communities, a faculty advisor for the Buddhist Sangha, and an office administrator.

In April of 2022, the office moved into its renovated home in Pratt House, a former residence now newly designed as a space of respite, gathering, and contemplative practices. Pratt now serves as a place to linger over a cup of tea, enjoy communal meals, and experience a wide array of student-initiated practices, gatherings, and discussions (Pratt is located between The Aula and Cushing House). Other RSLCP spaces include the Chapel, next to the President's House; the Bayit, Vassar's home for Jewish campus life, at 51 Collegeview Avenue; and the Muslim Prayer Space in the Old Laundry Building (enter by the ground floor entrance on the north side of the building).

For more information, please visit the [RSLCP Office](#) website, email [rsl@vassar.edu](mailto:rsl@vassar.edu), or call 845-437-5550.

## Office of Student Growth and Engagement

**Student Growth & Engagement (SGE)** fosters inclusive learning and living environments as integral components of a liberal arts education for Vassar students. SGE facilitates efforts to promote an environment that helps all students thrive with particular attention to those served by affinity resources such as Summer Engagement and Orientation, the ALANA Center, Office of International Services (OIS), the LGBTQ+ Center, the FLI+ Program, and the Women's Center. SGE proactively designs and implements student engagement opportunities, which guide intellectual and personal development, to ease the transition to college and promote belonging for all students at Vassar. The Dean of SGE is also one of the chairs of New Student Orientation. The SGE student lounge, study area, and office are located in Main C110. Please reach out to Dean Wendy Maragh Taylor, Associate Dean of the College for Student Growth & Engagement, for more information: [wmaraghtaylor@vassar.edu](mailto:wmaraghtaylor@vassar.edu), and Brenda Vasquez-Tavarez, SGE Office Specialist: [bvasqueztavarez@vassar.edu](mailto:bvasqueztavarez@vassar.edu).

**The Jeh Johnson ALANA Cultural Center** provides myriad resources and programs to enhance the campus life and academic experiences of African-American/Black, Latinx, Asian/Asian-American, and Native American and Indigenous students. The center provides a comfortable gathering space for student organizations that support students of color and offers opportunities for leadership development, intra-cultural and cross-cultural dialogues, community-building, lectures, and Heritage Month programs. The center is a freestanding building adjacent to the Powerhouse Theater.

### What are its achievements?

- Over the last decade, we have seen the growth of 21 different student organizations
- Renovation of the space
- Increased connection of the student body to the space
- Connections to the Poughkeepsie community

### Events/Programming/Initiatives

The ALANA Center hosts a plethora of events. Some include but are not limited to:

- Brunches/luncheons
- Public lectures
- Information sessions
- Social mixers
- Heritage Month celebrations
- ALANA student leader retreats
- ALANA Block Party
- ALANA Fest
- Panel discussions
- Screenings and discussion

Please reach out to Nicole Beveridge, Director of the ALANA Cultural Center, for more information: [nbeveridge@vassar.edu](mailto:nbeveridge@vassar.edu), and Amanda Cora, Program Manager of the ALANA Cultural Center, [acora@vassar.edu](mailto:acora@vassar.edu), Sophie McNutt, Administrative Assistant of the ALANA Cultural Center: [smcnutt@vassar.edu](mailto:smcnutt@vassar.edu).

**The Office of International Services (OIS)** offers a full range of resources for international students and scholars, including advice and assistance in visa, immigration, tax, employment, cultural and general matters. The office, located in College Center 238, supports international students in developing a sense of belonging and adjusting to and embracing a new culture. OIS works to involve and engage all members of the campus community in events, workshops, and other opportunities to share the wealth of global perspectives and experiences. The OIS Lounge, College Center 237, provides a space of belonging and engagement. Please contact Andrew Meade, Director of International Services, for more information at [anmeade@vassar.edu](mailto:anmeade@vassar.edu), and Yousra Khan, OIS Office Specialist: [yokhan@vassar.edu](mailto:yokhan@vassar.edu).

**The LGBTQ+ Center** oversees LGBTQ+ Resources at the College. The LGBTQ+ Center, located in College Center 213, is a place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning students to relax, socialize, and learn. The Center hosts discussions, lectures, and social events; provides meeting space for various student organizations; and has a robust library of LGBTQ+ related books. Please reach out to Julian Vela, Director of the LGBTQ Center, for more information: [jvela@vassar.edu](mailto:jvela@vassar.edu).

**The FLI Program** supports first-generation, low-income, and/or undocumented students at the college from matriculation through graduation. The Program hosts events and workshops, fosters faculty relationships, builds community, and helps students navigate the college landscape. Many participants begin their FLI involvement in the week before orientation, during the program's Foundations Week, but a student who identifies as first-generation, low-income, and/or undocumented can choose to engage with the Program at any time throughout their Vassar career. The FLI Office is located in Main C110, and the FLI Living Room (student lounge) is located in Josselyn House on the 2nd floor, through the Multipurpose Room in 234. Please contact Michelle Quock, Director of the FLI Program, for more information: [mquock@vassar.edu](mailto:mquock@vassar.edu).

For more information about Student Growth & Engagement, please visit the [Office of Student Growth & Engagement](#) website.

## Student Employment

Student Employment (Human Resources, Baldwin House 300) offers part-time, on-campus employment in departments throughout the college. Part-time, off-campus community service employment opportunities are also available for students with certain work-study awards. Students who qualify for work-study receive first-priority consideration for campus jobs at the start of each semester. The remaining jobs are available for any student who wishes to work. In general, students work an average of eight hours per week. Students may choose to work in the fall semester, spring semester, or for the entire academic year. Job registration for the academic year begins in late summer. Registration for break positions (i.e., winter, spring, summer) occurs several times throughout the year and is available for students who meet the eligibility requirements set for each break period. Prior to beginning work at Vassar, students must complete the I-9 and W-4 forms.

For more information, please visit the Student Employment website at the [Student Employment](#) website, email [stuemp@vassar.edu](mailto:stuemp@vassar.edu), or visit during office hours (MWF, 1 pm-4 pm).

## Athletics and Physical Education

### Facilities

**The Athletics and Fitness Center (AFC)** is a 53,000-square-foot facility that houses a 1,200-seat gymnasium that is the home to the men's and women's basketball programs. An elevated running track, a 5,000-square-foot training and cardiovascular facility, a multipurpose room, locker facilities, administrative offices, and a laundry/uniform room are also located in the AFC.

**Walker Field House**, a 42,250-square-foot facility adjacent to the AFC, features a six-lane swimming pool with a separate diving well and a field house boasting an indirectly lit, multipurpose playing surface that can be configured as five indoor tennis courts, basketball or volleyball courts, and a practice and competition site for the fencing programs. The building also has additional locker rooms and a sports medicine facility. Walker Field House is home to the men's and women's swimming and diving teams and the men's and women's fencing teams, serves as a practice site and intramural site, and hosts most physical education classes throughout the year.

**Kenyon Hall** contains six international squash courts, a volleyball facility with a Sport Court™ playing surface, a varsity student-athlete weight room, a satellite athletic training facility, locker rooms, and coaches' offices. Kenyon Hall is home to the men's and women's squash and men's and women's volleyball teams.

On-campus outdoor facilities include a nine-hole golf course (reduced rates for Vassar students, faculty, and staff), 12 outdoor tennis courts, and numerous playing fields. The **Prentiss Sports Complex** has a quarter-mile, all-weather track that surrounds a turf field for field hockey and



women's lacrosse, a competition grass lacrosse/soccer field, and a baseball field, as well as three grass practice fields. The **J.L. Weinberg Field Sports Pavilion** includes six locker rooms, an athletic training facility, and a laundry facility. The Vassar College Farm features two rugby fields and practice grids and is home to the men's and women's cross-country running course.

## Competition

**Varsity/NCAA Sanctioned.** The college supports 25 varsity teams. There are sports programs for both men and women in basketball, cross-country, fencing, lacrosse, soccer, squash, swimming and diving, tennis, indoor/outdoor track, and volleyball. The women's program also includes field hockey and golf, and the men's program includes baseball. Students expecting to try out for an intercollegiate sports team need to complete all medical and eligibility paperwork, including an on-campus medical examination. The clearance process must take place prior to participation in any practices. Practices for some fall sports may begin prior to classes. Please contact Kaitlin Leach, Deputy Director of Athletics, Director of Student-Athlete Welfare & Senior Woman Administrator, at [kleach@vassar.edu](mailto:kleach@vassar.edu), with any questions.

**Varsity Club Rugby and Rowing.** Men's and women's rugby and rowing are varsity club sports under the auspices of the director of athletics and physical education. Participation in these programs requires a participation fee. Students expecting to try out for club sports need to complete all medical and eligibility paperwork, including an on-campus medical examination. The clearance process must take place prior to participation in any practices. Practices for some fall sports may begin prior to classes. Please contact Kaitlin Leach, Deputy Director of Athletics, Director of Student-Athlete Welfare & Senior Woman Administrator, at [kleach@vassar.edu](mailto:kleach@vassar.edu), with any questions.

## Recreation

Our **Intramural Program** offers various leagues and tournaments to the whole Vassar community. Some of the sports offered throughout the academic year include indoor soccer, outdoor soccer, 3-on-3 basketball, 5-on-5 basketball, volleyball, wiffleball, badminton, floor hockey, golf, tennis, table tennis, and more. All registrations are done through the [Vassar IMLeagues](#) website, and you can follow us on Instagram at [@VassarRec](#). Please contact Mike Callahan at 845-437-7471 or at [micallahan@vassar.edu](mailto:micallahan@vassar.edu) for additional information.

Our **Life Fitness Program** offers more than 40 hours of non-credit fitness classes in many areas each week, including strength training, Pilates, Zumba, PiYo, judo, self-defense, yoga, and non-contact boxing. All Life Fitness classes are free for Vassar students. We also offer free stress-buster classes at the end of each semester. Registrations are required for all Life Fitness classes and are done through the [Vassar IMLeagues](#) website; you can follow us on Instagram at [@VassarRec](#). Please contact Mike Callahan at 845-437-7471 or [micallahan@vassar.edu](mailto:micallahan@vassar.edu) for additional information.



## ACADEMIC INFORMATION

This section of the handbook provides important information to help you decide on the courses you wish to take in your first semester. As you peruse the academic information and department descriptions, keep in mind the goals and purposes of your education. To quote the Vassar mission statement, the college aims to provide an education “that inspires each individual to lead a purposeful life. The College makes possible an education that promotes analytical, informed, and independent thinking and sound judgment; encourages articulate expression; and nurtures intellectual curiosity, creativity, respectful debate and engaged citizenship.”

Registration instructions can be found at the end of this section. Please read the following information carefully before registering. If you have any questions, you can refer to the online [Vassar course catalog](#).

### Graduation Requirements

There are four Vassar graduation requirements beyond those in your major:

#### First-Year Writing Seminar Requirement

All first-year students are required to complete at least one First-Year Writing Seminar in their first two semesters of study. These seminars provide a small class setting where students can develop critical thinking skills together with other first-year students who are adjusting to college work. The courses, which are offered in various disciplines, are only available to first-year students and have a maximum enrollment of 17. Particular attention is given to writing as an intellectual process and the effective expression of ideas in both written and oral form. For a list of Fall 2024 courses, please refer to the "First-Year Writing Seminars" section in this handbook. Only fall semester courses are currently listed, but new courses will be added for the spring.

#### Quantitative Course Requirement

Facility in quantitative reasoning is an important component of a liberal arts education. Quantitative reasoning includes the ability to understand and evaluate arguments framed in quantitative or numerical terms, to analyze subject matter using quantitative techniques, to construct and evaluate quantitative arguments of one's own, and to make reasoned judgments about the kinds of questions that can be effectively addressed through quantitative methods.

Accordingly, all Vassar students are required before their third year to complete at least one unit of coursework that shall develop or extend the student's facility in quantitative reasoning. Qualifying courses are designated by the faculty and are noted in the schedule of classes. Exemption from this requirement may be granted to students who have completed equivalent coursework as certified by the Dean of Studies.

Courses that fulfill the quantitative requirement are marked in the schedule of classes with a QA. Select “Quantitative Analysis” from the “Select a Course Type” drop-down menu in the online schedule of classes (AskBanner) to list all such courses.

## Foreign Language Proficiency Requirement

Recognizing the unique importance in undergraduate education of the study of foreign languages, the Vassar curriculum provides for both study of and concentration in Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Russian, and Spanish. In addition, students may learn Arabic, Hebrew, Korean, Old English, and - through the Self-Instructional Language Program - American Sign Language, Hindi, Irish, Portuguese, Swahili, Swedish, and Yiddish.

All students whose first language is English are required to demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language prior to the start of their final year. Departmental proficiency examinations will be given during the first week of classes in the fall semester; the exact time and location will be listed in the orientation schedule. Other methods by which you may meet this requirement are listed in the ‘Registration for Courses’ section. Please note that many study abroad programs require at least two years of college-level language instruction.

## Distribution Requirements

**All Vassar students are expected to reflect both depth and breadth in their course selection.** Depth is demonstrated by completing a major field of concentration; **breadth is demonstrated by taking courses across the four curricular divisions—arts, foreign languages and literatures, social sciences, and natural sciences—and in multidisciplinary programs.** To graduate, you will be required to elect at least 50% of your work outside of your major and 25% of your work outside the division in which you major. For example, a history major must complete at least 16 of the 32 units in courses outside of the history department and 8 of the 32 units in courses not in the social sciences. Advanced Placement credits are not permitted to count toward fulfillment of the distribution requirement. You should also be aware that all candidates for Phi Beta Kappa honors must demonstrate breadth and substance of coursework outside the major in addition to overall academic excellence. **You should consider taking courses in all curricular divisions and the multidisciplinary programs during your first year and not take two courses in a single department in the same semester.** As you consider your course selections for your first two years, you should be sure to include introductory work in any department or program in which you might major. All students must declare a major by the end of their fourth semester; applicants for education abroad must declare by December of their sophomore year.

## Pre-Matriculation Credit

Pre-matriculation credit may be awarded for college-level work completed before a student has matriculated at Vassar. The category of college-level work is a broad one that includes 1) Exam-Based Credit and 2) College Work.

### 1) Exam-Based Pre-Matriculation Credit

Exams include Advanced Placement exams (APs) and International Baccalaureate (IB). Vassar also recognizes GCE/Cambridge Advanced Level examinations (A Levels), the French Baccalaureate, the German Abitur, and the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE).

#### AP Credit

You may be eligible for college credit if you have taken CEEB Advanced Placement examinations. Your advanced placement score(s) must be sent directly to the Office of the Dean of First-Year Students from Advanced Placement Services, Box 6671, Princeton, N.J. 08541-6671 (telephone 609-771-7300).

The general policy is that students will receive 1.0 unit of pre-matriculation transfer credit for every score of 4 or 5, up to a maximum of 2.0 units of exam-based pre-matriculation credit. Admission into higher-level courses on the basis of AP credit is at the discretion of the individual department.

Please refer to this handbook's "Departments of Instruction and Multidisciplinary Programs" section for department-specific AP information.

Note: Scores will not appear on the transcript for Advanced Placement credit, only the department, exam name, and units transferred.

#### International Baccalaureate Program (IB)

Scores achieved for the Higher Level International Baccalaureate examinations are eligible for pre-matriculation transfer credit. Students who achieved a score of 5, 6, or 7 on an IB HL exam will receive 1.0 unit of transfer credit, up to the maximum of 2.0 units of exam-based pre-matriculation credit.

#### Other International Exams

Entering first-year students who have taken A-level examinations, the French Baccalaureate, the German Abitur, or the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) should consult the Office of the Dean of Studies in September to discuss the possibility of transfer credit.

**A maximum of 2.0 units of exam-based pre-matriculation credit will be awarded.**

## 2) Credit for College Work Done Prior to Matriculation at Vassar

Although many colleges and secondary schools offer programs in which students may earn credit toward a college degree, not all of these programs meet Vassar's criteria for transfer credit. College or university courses completed while a student was attending high school must meet the following requirements to be eligible for transfer credit:

- The course was taught on the college campus
- It was taught in person (not online or hybrid)
- It was taught by a college professor
- The course was in a classroom with undergraduate students (not only high school students)
- The course is not included on the high school transcript

The minimum grade required for any course to be eligible for transfer credit is C.

**A total of 6.0 units of pre-matriculation credit of any type will be awarded.** This can consist of 6.0 units of transfer credit from college courses taken prior to matriculation or some combination of transfer credits and exam-based credits. However, no more than 2.0 units of exam-based credit can count towards the total of 6.0 units.

Students may not apply for transfer credit for these courses until after they matriculate and are active students at Vassar.

Any questions about pre-matriculation credit should be directed to the Office of the Dean of Studies (845-437-7553) or email [deanoffirstyear@vassar.edu](mailto:deanoffirstyear@vassar.edu).

## Advanced Course Placement

Each department decides how much advanced standing a student who has taken AP or done other substantial work in that field will receive. Course placement advising will be part of the academic advising in the academic departments and programs on **Thursday morning, August 29**. Students must attend departmental drop-in advising on that day to receive proper course placement.

You can also contact the department chair if you feel you might be eligible for advanced course placement in a particular department. If you have any questions for specific departments before your arrival on campus, we recommend that you contact the appropriate department chairs by email rather than try to call them, as most academic department offices are closed for the summer.

Some departments offer placement examinations during Orientation Week. For dates, times, and locations, please check the online schedule on the [Orientation](#) website.

## Preparation for Teacher Certification

The teacher preparation programs in the Department of Education reflect the philosophy that schools can be sites of social change where students are given the opportunity to reach their maximum potential as individuals and community members. Vassar students who are preparing to teach work within a strong interdisciplinary framework of professional methods and a balanced course of study in a selected field of concentration leading to the degree of bachelor of arts. In addition to a degree in an academic discipline, they may also earn initial New York State certification at the childhood and adolescent levels. The certification is reciprocal in most other states.

Consistent with New York State requirements, the certification programs are based upon demonstration of competency in both academic and field settings. It is advisable that students planning to obtain childhood or adolescent certification consult with the education department during their first year.

For a full statement of the certification requirements and recommended sequences of study, please see the “Department of Education” section of the catalog and the [Department of Education](#) website. Enrollment in the courses listed is not limited to those seeking certification.

Vassar also offers a major and correlate in Educational Studies and a study away opportunity. Please see “Education” in the section on Departments of Instruction, later in this handbook, for more information.

## Preparation for Law School

At Vassar, pre-law advising is handled by Nick Migliorino, Jannette Swanson, and Stacy Bingham in the Center for Career Education (CCE), with faculty support from Professor Taneisha Means in the Political Science Department. Students interested in law-related careers should seek out these advisors to discuss any questions they have about pre-law studies and the law school application process.

Although Vassar has designated advisors for students interested in law school and a legal career, it does not recommend a special pre-law curriculum. Unlike medical school, no specific courses are required or suggested for entry into law school. Instead, law schools want students with a broad liberal arts education and a demanding major, not those who have taken a particular series of courses. A broad education means selecting courses from a variety of curricular divisions and departments. Just as there is no specific group of courses to prepare for law school, there is no single discipline in which students should major.

The CCE has various resources available to help students explore their interest in legal careers. Additionally, the office can help students connect with law-related summer opportunities and alumni working in the field of law. Students interested in law should specify this as an industry

preference on [Handshake](#) (the CCE's job/internship database and event calendar) to receive targeted communications about pre-law events.

For more information, please stop by the office (located in Main S-170), visit the [CCE](#) website, or email [cce@vassar.edu](mailto:cce@vassar.edu).

## Preparation for a Health Professions School

A student interested in a health professions career may major in any field, and our best advice is to major in a subject that truly interests you. Vassar students often look at medical school, but there are other options, including dental, veterinary, podiatry, physician assistant, physical therapy, nursing, etc. The basic requirements for most of the programs that train students for these careers include the following subjects: biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, biochemistry, and physics. Additionally, science courses often must include a laboratory component. English, mathematics (usually statistics and/or calculus), psychology, and sociology are strongly recommended and sometimes required. For medical school, social sciences are not typically required; however, the MCAT is 25% social science. Health professions schools require A-F grades in their declared required and recommended courses, so extra caution and careful consultation is needed if a student is considering an NRO election in any of these courses.

Students considering a science concentration should consult the individual departments and programs and read "To Prospective Science Majors" in the "Registration for Courses" section of this handbook. For more specific advice on planning a first-year program, refer to the "Medicine" section of "Preparation for Graduate Study" in the Vassar catalog.

If you are considering a career in the health professions, you should plan to attend the meeting held by the Pre-Health Advisor on Thursday, August 29. Careful planning of the first academic year is essential. Students should log in to Handshake to schedule an appointment with the pre-health advisor especially if they cannot attend the meeting, but also to ask any questions that aren't answered during the meeting or arise after.

Pre-health advising is housed in the Center for Career Education in Main South-170. Appointments are available Monday through Friday and may be scheduled via Handshake or by stopping by the office (located in Main S-170).

For more information, visit the [Pre-Health Advising](#) website, email [prehealth@vassar.edu](mailto:prehealth@vassar.edu), or call (845) 437-5285.

## Preparation for Education Abroad

Global learning experiences are an important component of your Vassar education. Students may study abroad during their junior year or first semester of senior year. If you are considering spending a term or your entire junior year studying abroad, start planning ahead to the best extent

possible. Give serious consideration to your course selections starting in your first year. For example, if you are considering study abroad in a non-English-speaking country, foreign language study is of the utmost importance and should be integrated consistently into your academic plan starting in your first year. Also, consider that in your study abroad proposal, you will need to demonstrate pursuit of relevant area studies coursework to support your study abroad plan (for example, taking courses in Latin American and Latinx Studies before studying abroad in Latin America).

All students are encouraged to consider study abroad when developing their academic plan. The College's study abroad "home tuition" policy permits financial aid to be applied for approved study abroad proposals. Over one hundred programs across more than 60 countries are available to students.

For more information, please visit the [Office of International Programs](#) website. You are also welcome to visit the office in Main N-173 during drop-in hours or email [internationalprograms@vassar.edu](mailto:internationalprograms@vassar.edu) to make an appointment.

## REGISTRATION FOR COURSES

During the summer, you will pre-register for your fall 2024 classes using the electronic pre-registration form, which can be found at the [New Students](#) website. **This site will be open from June 17 - July 19. You will receive an email about the exact process, so please check your Vassar email regularly.** To complete this form, you will need to consult:

- The [2024/2025 catalog](#).
- *The First-Year Handbook*
- The online [schedule of classes](#) (under the 'Registration and Advising' tab)

For more advice about building a schedule summer pre-registration, we encourage you to watch the relevant videos on the [Summer Events](#) page and the New Student Orientation [Moodle](#) page.

The procedures for enrolling in your fall semester classes are as follows:

**1) Summer Pre-registration.** Over the summer, you will pre-register for up to three academic classes. Once you arrive on campus for New Student Orientation, you will complete your schedule with the help of your pre-major advisor.

In Part I of the summer pre-registration form, list your first choice for a First-Year Writing Seminar and three alternate First-Year Writing Seminars in case your first choice is unavailable. Please choose only the courses that will be offered in the fall.

In Part II, list other courses you would like to take in order of preference. You may list as many courses as you like in this section.

By the end of summer pre-registration, most first-year students will be enrolled in a First-Year Writing Seminar and two additional one-unit courses (or 1.5 units if electing Elementary Chinese, Japanese, or Korean). If no seats are available in any of the First-Year Writing Seminars you selected, the Registrar will attempt to place you in three courses listed on Part II

of the pre-registration form. You will receive notification of the results of pre-registration during New Student Orientation.

**2) Registration during Orientation.** As indicated on the orientation schedule, several events are planned to help you complete your class schedule. On **Tuesday, August 27**, you will meet with your faculty advisor in small groups to discuss your course selections. On **Wednesday, August 28**, faculty will give research presentations. On **Thursday, August 29**, special **advising info sessions** will be devoted to language study and education abroad, pre-health, pre-law, teacher certification, English, art, and dance. You can also consult with any department or program about appropriate course selections or special permission during **drop-in advising** open houses on Thursday morning. Thursday afternoon has been set aside for you to meet individually with your faculty advisor. After gathering the necessary information and making additions and revisions to your course selections, all first-year students will officially register for fall courses on **Friday, August 30**.

**3) Add Period (through September 10).** Once classes begin, you may continue to add courses, up to a maximum of 4.5 units, to your schedule until Tuesday, September 10. Students need both their instructor's and their advisor's permission to add a class during the add period. Under no circumstances are first-semester first-year students granted permission to exceed 4.5 units. All students must be registered for the minimum of 3.5 units by September 10.

A copy of your final registration will be available online at Vassar's website via Ask Banner. **Be sure to review it carefully and report any errors to the Registrar's Office immediately.** You will be held responsible for all courses listed on this schedule and will not receive credit for any course or section in which you are not officially enrolled.

**4) Drop Period (through October 11).** Students may drop courses (but not below 3.5 units) with their advisor's approval until Friday, October 11.

## Guidelines for Course Selection

First-year students are strongly encouraged to take 4 or 4.5 units in their first semester (full-time enrollment is between 3.5 and 4.5 units). Students may also elect .5 units of Intensive (designated with "INT" on Ask Banner) coursework for a total of 4.5 units per semester. Vassar offers a limited number of 0.5-unit courses, mainly in the departments of music and physical education. You will need to consult the schedule of classes on the [New Students](#) website for a thorough listing of these and other half-unit academic courses offered in the fall semester. Elementary and intermediate Chinese, Japanese, and Korean language courses grant 1.5 units per semester.

### Intensives

Intensives are a new style of course offering. They are innovative learning opportunities that complement traditional classroom courses by extending beyond the classroom for various faculty-mentored experiences requiring a high level of student agency and independence. Every



intensive is different, but the following descriptors capture the spirit of the intensives.

- Project-, group-, or workshop-based
- Collaborative engagement between students and instructors
- Intentional partnerships within the nearby community, the Hudson Valley, or other parts of the world
- Field/travel experiences
- Mentoring rather than lecture-based
- Integrating various aspects of students' previous studies
- Fluid time and space structures
- Focused research experiences
- Student-driven, responsive to student initiative
- Non-traditional course schedules

Intensives will be designated with "INT" on Ask Banner. Some intensives may require special permission or a proposal. Please contact the course professor with any questions.

## Distribution

**Vassar strongly recommends that students take courses in each of the four divisions (Arts, Foreign Languages and Literatures, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences).** Students are also expected to work in more than one department or program each semester.

In addition, please keep these three specific requirements in mind when selecting your first-year courses:

**1. First-Year Writing Seminar Requirement.** All students must successfully complete a First-Year Writing Seminar within the first two semesters of study; please consult this handbook's "First-Year Writing Seminars" section for the 2024/25 offerings. Courses are offered in both fall and spring semesters, with a greater number in the fall.

**2. Quantitative Course Requirement.** All students are required before the beginning of their third year to complete one unit of coursework requiring the learning and practice of a significant amount of quantitative analysis. Exemption from this requirement is limited to students who have completed equivalent coursework at another college or university as certified by the Dean of Studies. Courses that satisfy this requirement are designated QA in the schedule of classes. Select "Quantitative Analysis" from the "Select a Course Type" drop-down menu in the online schedule of classes to list all such courses. For descriptions of these courses, please consult the relevant section of the catalog.

**3. Foreign Language Proficiency Requirement.** This requirement applies to all entering first-year students whose first language is English. If your first language is not English, you must apply to the Office of the Dean of Studies once you are on campus to confirm your exemption. (Exemptions may be granted to students who have completed literature or language study in their first language at the secondary school level.) Many first-year students will have already demonstrated proficiency by reporting a score of 4 or 5 on an AP in a foreign language. If you

have Higher Level IB credit in a foreign language, please consult with the Dean of Studies Office. **We strongly recommend that you complete this requirement early in your Vassar career.**

“Proficiency” is defined as the level achieved at the completion of an elementary language course. Consequently, you must successfully complete a full year at the introductory level or a semester at the intermediate level to demonstrate proficiency.

Please note that if you are considering education abroad in a non-English-speaking country, you must have completed at least a full year at the intermediate level of the appropriate foreign language by the end of your sophomore year.

Proficiency can also be demonstrated by passing an exam prepared by Vassar faculty. Proficiency exams in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Russian, and Spanish will be given on the first day of classes in the fall semester. Check the orientation schedule for times and locations.

Students who want to continue a language studied before Vassar are placed at the level appropriate to their previous training. To identify the appropriate level for you, please consult the guidelines provided by the various language departments in the section on “Departments of Instruction” in this handbook. Language faculty will provide additional placement advising during Orientation Week on Thursday, August 29. First-year students are not encouraged to take two elementary-level language courses.

**To summarize, all students whose first language is English are required prior to the start of their final year to demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language in one of the following five ways:**

1. One year of foreign language study at Vassar at the introductory level or one semester at the intermediate level or above;
2. the passing of a proficiency examination administered by one of the foreign language departments, the Self-Instructional Language Program, or, for languages not in the Vassar curriculum by the Office of the Dean of Studies;
3. an AP exam score of 4 or 5 in a foreign language;
4. equivalent foreign language coursework completed at another institution; such courses may involve languages not taught at Vassar; or
5. completion of Old English and Beowulf (English 235 and 236); both Old English and Beowulf must be completed to satisfy the requirement.

## To Prospective Science Majors

A student who is thinking of majoring in one of the natural sciences should consider electing two science courses in the first semester. Several natural science departments require work outside the department to complete the major. For example, a major in biology requires Chemistry 125. Not all introductory courses in the natural sciences have laboratory components; consult the course descriptions in the catalog. Your first semester should also include at least one course outside the Natural Sciences division.

## Yearlong Courses

Most courses open to first-year students are semester-long, with “a” courses offered in the fall and “b” courses in the spring. However, all elementary foreign language courses are yearlong (for example, French 105-106). As with all “hyphen” courses, you must successfully complete the second semester to receive credit for the first. Another year-long course open to first-year students is Art 102-103. Yearlong courses are designated with a YL in the schedule of classes. “Slash” courses are year-long sequences; while you must take the first semester to qualify for the second, you do not need to take the second to receive credit for the first: an example of this is Music 105/106. Students who fail the first semester of a “slash” course may not enroll in the second semester without permission from the department chair.

Please note that some yearlong courses are “provisionally graded.” This means that, in the words of the catalog, “the final grade received at the end of the year automatically becomes the grade that will be recorded on the student’s transcript for both the first and the second semester.” Italian 105-106, for example, is provisionally graded; if a student receives a C in the first semester and an A in the second, two credits of A will appear on that student’s transcript at the end of the first year. A student who elects to take a provisionally graded course under the non-recorded option must take both semesters on this basis. Provisionally graded courses are marked in the schedule of classes with a PR.

## About Grades

The Office of the Registrar electronically releases final grades to students at the conclusion of each semester. Copies of a student’s transcript are available to the student’s faculty advisor, to department chairs and program directors (to assist with advising), and the Dean of Studies Office. Any other request to see a student’s grades must be accompanied by the student’s written permission.

Pre-matriculation work completed at another institution (including AP credit) and accepted for application towards the Vassar degree is recorded only as units of credit; the grades do not transfer for calculation in the Vassar grade point average. All post-matriculation transfer credits will be listed on the Vassar transcript along with the grades earned at the other institution.

However, in all cases, only Vassar coursework will be computed into the Vassar cumulative grade point average.

There are two types of nongraded Vassar work: a) courses that the faculty has designated as ungraded (grades are Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, or, for independent work, Distinction), and b) courses that are normally graded but which the student elects to take under the non-recorded option. For an explanation of the non-recorded option (NRO), please see “General Academic Regulations and Information” in the “Degrees and Courses of Study” section of the college catalog. The schedule of classes indicates which courses may be taken NRO. The total number of NRO units may not exceed 4. For transfer students, this limit is reduced by 1 unit for each year of advanced standing awarded to the student. The total number of ungraded units may not exceed 5. For transfer students, this limit is reduced by 1 unit for each year of advanced standing awarded to the student. This ungraded limit does not apply to any units taken in excess of the 32-unit minimum required for graduation.

The non-recorded option has been approved by the faculty to permit students to elect courses that may be outside their primary fields of interest without penalty of a low grade. Since first-year students are in the process of defining their principal fields of interest or expertise, faculty advisors often recommend that students not take courses NRO during their first year. All NRO elections must be approved by the faculty advisor and filed with the registrar by the end of the first eight weeks of classes (in the fall, November 8).

Although official grade reports are issued only at the end of each semester, instructors are encouraged to notify the Dean of Studies Office of any students performing below satisfactory (“C”) level at any point during the semester. Class advisors may request a conference with these students to discuss their academic progress.

At the end of each semester, the Committee on Student Records reviews the performance of all students with an unsatisfactory record, including any student with one F, two Ds, or a term or cumulative grade point average below 2.0. (Students cannot graduate with a cumulative or major GPA below 2.0.) These students are placed on academic probation, and the committee may recommend or require a leave of absence or withdrawal from the college. First-year students who, at the end of the year, have a grade point average of 1.5 or below usually may not return the following year. A student remains in good academic standing (and is eligible to apply for financial aid) as long as he or she is matriculated at Vassar and is considered by the committee to be making satisfactory progress toward the degree.

The principal causes of unsatisfactory performance at Vassar are irregular class attendance and the late submission of written work. Although there is no college-wide attendance policy, individual instructors and departments have instituted attendance policies, and these policies can directly affect a student’s grade.

## Statement on Assessment

Vassar College assesses student learning across the curriculum. The goal of these assessment activities is to improve student learning. For this purpose, we will collect and keep on file copies of representative examples of student work from a variety of courses and programs, for example: assignments, papers, exams, multimedia presentations, portfolios, and theses. These copies may be used for institutional research, assessment, and accreditation purposes. All samples of student work will be made anonymous to the extent possible before they are used in any assessment exercise. No assessment exercise will affect a student's grade or require additional work. Any evaluation of the work will be confidentially handled. The result of the assessment of student learning will be used to improve teaching and learning at Vassar College.

## Now It's Up to You!

You are now ready to begin to complete the summer pre-registration form. The electronic schedule of classes on the [New Students](#) website lists all the fall semester courses that are open to first-year students without special permission.

That is, all 100-level courses plus those 200-level courses in foreign languages, mathematics, etc., in which you can place yourself based on your high school background. These courses are the only ones first-year students can elect during summer pre-registration. When you get to campus, you can consult a complete online schedule of classes for the fall semester via Ask Banner. If you have any questions about completing the pre-registration form, you may call the Office of the Dean of First-Year Students (845-437-5258) on weekdays during summer office hours (8:30 am–4:30 pm EST) or email [deanoffirstyear@vassar.edu](mailto:deanoffirstyear@vassar.edu).

## A Note about Ask Banner

[Ask Banner](#) is a site that gives you access to a wide range of important information. We recommend that you bookmark this page on your browser. The [General Information](#) link on the Ask Banner site will allow you to view the online schedule of classes and the employee and student directories. The [Student and Financial Aid link](#) on the Ask Banner site will allow you to access personal information such as your schedule, transcript, and billing information.

## A Note about Degree Works

Degree Works is an advising tool that helps students successfully negotiate our curriculum requirements using two functions - degree auditing and degree planning. You can access this tool through the [Degree Works link](#) on Ask Banner. The **degree auditing function** enables students and their advisers to easily view all courses taken and how those courses count toward Vassar's graduation requirements. Through the "what if" feature, students can see how courses they have taken or plan to take could apply against specific major requirements and what additional courses will still be needed. The **degree planning function** enables students to create their plan to

graduate by simply dragging and dropping courses they plan to take. You should create a plan for the fall semester before you meet with your pre-major advisor during Orientation Week.

## First-Year Writing Seminars

Every entering first-year student is required to enroll in a First-Year Writing Seminar. These courses are available only to first-year students, have a maximum enrollment of 17, and are offered by a number of departments. The First-Year Writing Seminar introduces students to critical reading and persuasive writing at Vassar and helps them transition to college-level writing. These courses from across Vassar's curriculum challenge students to enter sophisticated conversations by asserting compelling claims and supporting those claims through an organized presentation of evidence. Each First-Year Writing Seminar is built around a rich topic, giving students a complex set of readings, questions, and debates to consider as they learn to engage with the ideas of others and articulate their positions.

You will note that most of the First-Year Writing Seminars are offered in the fall semester. The online pre-registration form will ask you to **list four choices for a fall First-Year Writing Seminar**. However, due to enrollment limits, not everyone will be placed in a fall First-Year Writing Seminar during summer pre-registration. There are additional opportunities to enroll in a fall First-Year Writing Seminar during orientation and the add period at the beginning of the term.

Students not taking a First-Year Writing Seminar in the fall will be given priority in selecting one for the spring semester. While you may elect more than one First-Year Writing Seminar in your first year, you may not enroll in more than one First-Year Writing Seminar per semester. AP credit will not exempt you from the requirement. For department policies on AP, see the "Departments of Instruction" section in this handbook.

### Specific information about the English 101 sections:

- No first-year student should enroll in more than one English course in a single semester.
- English 101 may not be taken more than once.
- Students planning to major in English or pursue intermediate English work are strongly encouraged to take 101 and 170 in sequence.

## Fall Sections

(Please note that this information is subject to change. You should consult the online schedule of classes on Ask Banner for up-to-date information.)

**AFRS-105-01: *The Self and the Western Other in Modern Arabic Literature*:** The cultural "encounter with the West" is a major theme in modern Arabic literature and culture. In this course, we read and discuss an array of novels, novellas, and short stories that depict personal and collective histories of encounters between Arab and African postcolonial subjects and the West, both at home and in the diaspora. We analyze a selection of documentary and feature films by

North African and Middle East directors that dramatize this encounter and explore its consequences. The course familiarizes students with persistent orientalist and colonialist representations of Arab and Islamic otherness in Western literary and cultural discourses. Students develop a better understanding of the region's cultural complexity and its unresolved relationship to a Western global modernity that it contests and admires simultaneously. The readings include critical excerpts from Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and literary works by such authors as Assia Djebar and Tayeb Salih, among others. Mootacem Mhiri.

**ANTH-170-01: *Topics in Anthropology: Water and Culture.*** Water is necessary for human life. But cultural anthropologists have shown that it is always, also, meaningful in a remarkable range of ways. In our daily water choices, and in our water goals as citizens, we can make better choices when we know more about different water systems in the world and how other people value water. The course introduces classic anthropological approaches such as “making the strange familiar and the familiar strange” and considering the “social life of things.” Focusing on the relation between drinking water and wider cultural systems, water localities studied through texts and films may include Bali, Singapore, the US, former Soviet Georgia, urban Egypt, and Fiji. Students experiment with different genres for written assignments. The course also provides an introduction to the Poughkeepsie area through group projects at local water-related sites. Martha Kaplan.

**CLCS-184-01: *Questions of Character:*** (Same as FFS-184) In the mid-twentieth century, many French and American writers and critics began insisting that we treat fictional characters as strictly textual entities. Characters, they declared, are words on a page, not to be confused with psychological beings capable of moral agency. But why do we still care what fictional characters do? What incites us to talk about characters as if they were real people? What can a renewed interrogation of character teach us about storytelling, other cultures, and our own individual or group biases? We pursue these questions by examining short stories, two films and a play. The course emphasis is on close reading discussion, writing for revision, peer review, and the exploration of secondary texts representing a variety of disciplinary approaches. Kathleen Hart.

**COGS-110-01: *The Science and Fiction of Mind:*** Our understanding of what minds are and of how they work has exploded dramatically in the last half-century. As in other areas of science, the more we know, the harder it becomes to convey the richness and complexity of that knowledge to non-specialists. This First-Year Course explores two different styles of writing for explaining new findings about the nature of mind to a general audience. The most direct of these styles is journalistic and explanatory and is well represented by the work of people like Steven Pinker, Bruce Bower, Stephen J. Gould, and Ray Kurzweil. The second style is fictional. At its best, science fiction not only entertains, it also stretches the reader's mind to a view of implications and possibilities beyond what is currently known. Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Greg Bear, and Richard Powers all provide excellent models of this kind of writing. In this course, students practice both ways of writing about technical and scientific discoveries. By working simultaneously in both styles, it should become clear that when done well, even a strictly explanatory piece of science writing tells a story. By the same token, even a purely fictional narrative can explain and elucidate how the real world works. The focus of our work is material from the sciences of mind,

but topics from other scientific areas may also be explored. This course does not serve as a prerequisite for upper-level courses in Cognitive Science. Ken Livingston.

**EDUC-162-01: *Education and Opportunity in the United States*:** In this course, students identify, explore, and question prevailing assumptions about education in the United States. The objectives of the course are for students to develop both a deeper understanding of the system's historical, structural, and philosophical features and to look at schools with a critical eye. We examine issues of power and control at various levels of the education system. Participants are encouraged to connect class readings and discussions to personal schooling experiences to gain new insights into their own educational foundations. Among the questions that are highlighted are: How should schools be organized and operated? What information and values should be emphasized? Whose interests do schools serve? The course is open to both students interested in becoming certified to teach and those who are not yet certain about their future plans but are interested in educational issues. Maria Hantzopoulos.

**ENGL-101-01: *British Literature from Beowulf to Milton*:** Texts may include *Beowulf*, *Pearl*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Paradise Lost*, and authors may include Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. Mark Amodio.

**ENGL-101-02: *School Days*:** We will read and discuss narratives about schooling, education, and coming-of-age. These tales take various forms, including fables, fairy tales, poems, memoirs, *Bildungsroman*, Gothic fiction, speculative fiction, campus satire, graphic novels, film. Likely texts: Book One of Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (both Muriel Spark's novel and Ronald Neame's film), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*, Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, Peter Weir's *Dead Poets Society*, Alexander Payne's *The Holdovers*. Heesok Chang

**ENGL-101-03: *What is a Classic?*:** Why are some works of literature called classics? Which works are these? Do they have common traits? How is it that they have endured while other works have been largely forgotten? Are all classics related in some way to the original classics of Greek and Latin literature? How old does a work have to be to achieve the stature of a classic? Can there be modern or even contemporary classics? Through reading and discussion of poetry and prose works often thought of as classics, this class investigates these and other questions. Authors include some of the following: Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Jonathan Swift, Samuel Johnson, Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, D. H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Nabokov, Flannery O'Connor, Joseph Heller, James Baldwin, Seamus Heaney, Elizabeth Bishop, Toni Morrison, Zadie Smith. Robert DeMaria.

**ENGL-101-04: TBD**

**ENGL-101-05: *The Essay Form*:** The high-school essay trapped in the Darth Vader facemask called the topic sentence. And the immobile drapery of the five-paragraph costume armor. This is an exaggeration, of course, but to write in more imaginative ways let us examine the experiments in prose undertaken by essayists of the past hundred years or so: George Orwell writing about



shooting an elephant, Carolyn Forché about a colonel in El Salvador, Sean Wilentz on mourning after September 11, John Berger and Susan Sontag looking at photographs, Laurel Johnson Black on being a poor working-class kid at a rich college, Teju Cole's drone tweets. Also, Annie Dillard's advice to young writers, Geoff Dyer on Nietzsche, Grace Paley on teaching, David Shields on the lyric essay, Vivian Gornick on the situation and the story, Joy Williams on her dog, Edwidge Danticat on her uncle's death, Eliot Weinberger on what he heard about Iraq, Jenny Diskin on rape, Leslie Jamison on James Agee, Eula Biss on pain, Denis Johnson in Liberia, and David Foster Wallace on anything. The above readings will be posted on Moodle. In addition, we will read *So Long, See You Tomorrow* by William Maxwell. This book is available at the college bookstore. We will write brief essays (one to two pages) for each class and two longer essays (about eight pages in length). Amitava Kumar.

**ENGL-101-06: *Poetic Forms and Possibilities*:** A poem abides form to reach its meaning. Its form is the structure or set of governing rules--a container for meaning. Just as a physical vessel provides a shape and coordinates for its contents--and as contents may determine the most appropriate vessel for their holding--poetic form negotiates with what its writer hopes to render. In this course, we will read and discuss several specific poetic structures, such as the sestina, the villanelle, the sonnet, and the pantoum. We will consider what each offers, try our own hands at writing them, read scholarship on verse forms, and compose literary critical essays, including a close reading and a research paper. Tracy O'Neill

**ENGL-101-07: *Jane Eyre*:** Published pseudonymously in 1847, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* tells the story of a heated romance between a "poor, obscure, plain" governess and a Byronic landowner with a Gothic past. The novel quickly became part of the Victorian cultural landscape, even though Brontë's rebellious heroine upended nineteenth-century notions of propriety and femininity. *Jane Eyre* was not only popular in its day, however. It has had a hypnotic hold on subsequent generations of writers, who revised and re-imagined Brontë's text in order to contest its representations of love, madness, colonialism, Englishness, feminism, and education. In this first-year seminar, we explore *Jane Eyre*'s complicated relationship with its literary descendants and ask fundamental questions about literary influence, canon formation, narration, and women's writing.

This is also a course that focuses on reading and writing. We move away from thematic readings of texts towards more complex modes of analysis that include considerations of form, genre, and historical context. We pay close and careful attention to the language of literary texts under consideration. We leave behind the five-paragraph essay taught in high school to focus on writing as a process. We draft, review, and revise writing throughout the term. One of the goals of the course is to help you become more self-conscious about your own reading and writing practices. Susan Zlotnick.

**ENGL-101-08: *American Bestsellers*:** There have been bestselling books since long before the term "bestseller" came into widespread use during the late nineteenth century. And although in the twentieth century bestsellers became associated with the novel, in the American colonies and early United States the books with the biggest sales included a variety of texts, such as primers, almanacs, and the Bible. This course approaches the practice of critical reading by tracing a

history of reading in early America, thinking about which texts were popular and why. We focus on joining the careful analysis of textual detail with attention to historical contexts shaping ideas about reading—what it is, why people do it, and how it matters. Our texts represent a range of genres, including execution sermons, captivity narratives, and seduction tales, and may include works like Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter," Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave*, and Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. We also focus on developing skills in academic writing, practicing writing as a recursive and collaborative process and a means of developing your own contribution to critical dialogue. In this work, you have the chance to study a contemporary bestseller of your choosing—anything from Stephen King's *Carrie* to Michelle Obama's *Becoming*. Blevin Shelnutt.

**ENGL-101-09: *The Unknown Self*:** This course explores unreliable narratives and questions of self-knowledge. Through close readings of contemporary texts, you'll sharpen your interpretive skills with the goal of a higher, more rigorous media literacy. In short, you'll know better what you don't know. Expect spirited debate, dialectical essays, and creative exercises around memory, identity, and blind spots both personal and cultural. Authors may include Zadie Smith, Jorge Luis Borges, Kazuo Ishiguro, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, Mariana Enríquez, and Maggie Nelson. Ryan Chapman.

**ENGL-101-10: *The Fragment as a Form of Knowledge*:** "Fragments are the only forms I trust," writer Donald Barthelme once claimed, before later suggesting "that particular line has been richly misunderstood so often ... I have thought of making a public recantation." But what are fragmentary forms, and why trust them more than others—or renounce such faith? This course examines various fragmentary texts—works composed of small pieces, works that seem (or that are) unfinished or incomplete, works perhaps not intended for publication, works constructed via combining and/or destroying parts of other pieces of writing, etc. We may begin with the notes and aphorisms of Schlegel, Lichtenberg, and Joubert, but our primary focus is on the fragment as form, as process, as metaphor in contemporary writing. Writers discussed may include Mary- Kim Arnold, Eula Biss, Anne Boyer, Anne Carson, Paul Metcalf, M. NourbeSe Philip, Claudia Rankine, Srikanth Reddy, David Shields, Lê Thi Diem Thúy, L. Ann Wheeler, and others. Joshua Harmon.

**ENGL-101-11: *Melodrama*:** This course looks at melodrama as a genre, a form, and a mode—one that travels from the 19th century to today across theater, opera, music, fiction, television, and film. Beginning with melodrama's roots in the 19th century, we examine the infusion of music into theater and its subsequent pairing with excess emotion. In particular, we look into melodrama's frequent staging of issues related to race, gender, sexuality, and disability. From here, we shuttle back and forth between the 19th century and today to chart the various iterations and adaptations of melodrama across time, countries, and art forms. Over the course of the semester, we explore a wide range of texts that might include Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon* and Brandon Jacobs Jenkins' *An Octoroon*, Victorian "sensation" fiction, telenovelas and soap operas, reality television, musical theater, "melodramatic" teen films like *My Life as a Teenage Drama Queen*, and even Lorde's album *Melodrama*. By collecting and comparing these texts, this first-year seminar takes an interdisciplinary approach to exploring the interactions and adaptations of

melodrama in order to make our own theory of what exactly makes something "melodramatic."  
Christian Lewis.

**ENGL-101-12: *Into the Apocalyptic Landscape*:** This course explores characters caught in the dreamscape of violence and apocalyptic visions that is perhaps unique to American history and culture, from slavery to skinheads to school shootings. We examine the concept—coined by rock critic Greil Marcus—of Old Weird America, a folkloric history that has spawned murder ballads, the music of Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash, and a wide range of literary work, including poetry by Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, Lucille Clifton, and Etheridge Knight; stories by Edgar Allan Poe, Joyce Carol Oates, Flannery O'Connor, Christine Schutt, and Denis Johnson. Longer works may include novels by William Faulkner, Gayle Jones, Robert Stone, William Vollmann, Hunter Thompson, and the graphic artist, Lynda Barry. David Means.

**ENGL-101-13: *Bad Taste*:** While English classes usually focus on works of art and literature collectively considered good, this class revels in the bad: the embarrassing or disgusting, the artistic failure, the guilty pleasure. With the help of some influential theorists of aesthetic badness and a selection of "bad" examples drawn from poetry, fiction, film, and visual art, we examine the categories—ugly, kitschy, campy, sappy, problematic, and so on—that have been and continue to be used to police what is and is not art, and to distinguish "good" art from "bad." We consider how artistic hierarchies become entangled with other kinds of hierarchies, exploring how "bad" art both sustains and subverts racial, sexual, and economic power. Why, for example, are the terms "rom com" and "chick flick" so often used dismissively? What makes a work of art provocative and avant-garde, rather than offensive—or simply gross? And when does the "merely" bad become "so-bad-it's-good"? In the final three weeks of the course, the students are asked to reflect on the terms they themselves use to evaluate and describe cultural products, and to provide categories and case studies from their own experiences as consumers. Mark Taylor.

**ENGL-101-14: *The Heartache and Humor of Loneliness in Fiction*:** Loneliness is one of the driving forces of literature—loneliness in isolation, loneliness in a big city, loneliness in a family or relationship or social setting. In the best cases, reading provides an antidote to loneliness, but how do authors writing about loneliness accomplish this? How do they write about isolation or alienation without isolating or alienating the reader? What do these stories have to tell us about connection when we don't have access to other people? We focus on the underexplored relationship between humor and loneliness, and consider the literary techniques that can make loneliness funny, suspenseful, and intellectually engaging. We look to classic and contemporary novels and short stories for their answers and write essays and our own creative pieces. Readings include work by George Saunders, Sally Rooney, Carson McCullers, Yiyun Li, Ernest Hemingway, Carmen Maria Machado, and Lorrie Moore, among others. Christine Vines.

**ENGL-101-15: *Succession, from Tudor England to HBO*:** The allure of power—and the impulse to hoard it—animated some of the greatest works of the English Renaissance. This course explores them alongside contemporary attempts to represent the perennial problem of handing over control: the abdication of Shakespeare's moody Richard II beside the regal ascension of Black Panther; the antiroyalist fury of Lucy Hutchinson—one of England's first

women writers—athwart the antidemocratic ploys of *Succession's* Logan Roy—for two examples. In the first half of the term, we'll set these cultural interventions against the backdrop of very real leaders navigating the chaos of being on top, sometimes with literary flair of their own. In the second half, we'll increasingly consider *Succession's* personal stakes too: the burdens of carrying on a family name, the pressures of preserving an artistic legacy.

Though the texts we'll read range in date and genre, they raise a similar set of questions: how does a society cope with unresponsive leaders? How can problematic charges of “unfitness”—based on race, gender, ability, etc.—be untangled from more legitimate concerns about despotism? What happens when familial infighting, or the private consolidation of wealth, has public consequences? Why use the past to comment on the present? How can we create art—or, for that matter, simply live life—in that present with the past always at our backs? And why does *Succession* inspire such imaginative vivacity in the first place? Together, we'll devise answers to these queries—while bringing new ones to the table—as we attend to verbal nuance, appreciate literary ambiguity, finetune a scholarly writing practice, and contribute to urgent public debate today. Pasquale Toscano.

**ENGL-101-16: *Allegories of the Self*:** This course provides first-year students with practice in close reading and interpretive writing and conversation through the examination of symbolic worlds inscribed in various media, including texts and objects in Vassar collections, with a focus on allegorical narrative in classical and Medieval literary sources and Medieval and Early Modern art. Our consideration of allegories as knowledge systems introduces you to the historical development of liberal arts education in the medieval schools, as well as to the culture of libraries and the organization of knowledge. Because allegory often serves as a medium for examining the microcosm of the interior soul in its relationship to the macrocosm of the natural Universe, we also explore the idiom as a prototype for the modern science of psychology. This course thus serves to familiarize you with conventions of meaning in creative works in various media expressly composed to be interpreted, introduce you to the foundations, tools, and culture of higher education, and also function as a practicum for improving your skills with written and spoken language. Thomas Hill.

**ENGL-101-17: *{pre[post]} Modern Poetry: A First-Year Writing Seminar*:** A poem is an ambush! It is meant to sabotage your sense of reality and expand your perception of language and things—of what we know and how we know it. Reading, explicating, crafting, and performing poetry is a revelatory process. In this First-Year Writing Seminar, we encounter poetry from the Long 20<sup>th</sup> Century that offers testimony to the shifting experiences of modern life from Baudelaire to Ferlinghetti and from H.D. to Ada Limón. We pay careful and generous attention to the poet's craft of imbuing creative work with meaning (via form and language) as well as the reader's critical response (via contextualization and comparative analysis). As such, our seminar is a study of curious reading, collaborative discussion, and written explication. Matthew Schultz.

**FFS-184-01: *Questions of Character: A First-Year Writing Seminar*:** (Same as CLCS-184) In the mid-twentieth century, many French and American writers and critics began insisting that we treat fictional characters as strictly textual entities. Characters, they declared, are words on a page, not to be confused with psychological beings capable of moral agency. But why do we still

care what fictional characters do? What incites us to talk about characters as if they were real people? What can a renewed interrogation of character teach us about storytelling, other cultures, and our own individual or group biases? We pursue these questions by examining short stories, two films and a play. The course emphasis is on close reading discussion, writing for revision, peer review, and the exploration of secondary texts representing a variety of disciplinary approaches. Kathleen Hart.

**FILM-120-01: *The Screenplay as Literature*:** This course is a survey of the history, theory, and analysis of the screenplay as a literary form. How did the screenplay arise? Is the screenplay a piece of literature? What is the future for the screenplay? How do we read and contextualize a screenplay within the greater scope of film and literature? These are some of the questions we explore. We also study screenplays in and of themselves, in order to better understand how they are crafted, how they function, and why they exist. Joseph Muszynski.

**FILM-181-01: *Mise en Scène: A First-Year Writing Seminar*:** In 1986, the French critic Fereydoun Hoveyda stated that “the originality of the auteur lies not in the subject matter they choose, but in the technique they employ, i.e., the *mise en scène*.” Since at least the 1960s, the term *mise en scène* has been claimed by film criticism to express the singularity of a filmmaker’s work and to address cinema’s specific vocation in contrast with the other arts. But what exactly is *mise en scène*? How has the term been used, and what does it say about a film director’s practice? In this class, we read and discuss definitions and applications of *mise en scène* as an analytical concept and study how it appears in films by different filmmakers working in distinct production contexts. Fabio Andrade.

**GRST-188-01: *Classical Rhetoric and the 2024 Presidential Campaign: A First-Year Writing Seminar*:** We are all inundated by words and images intended to persuade, whether from advertisers, from supposedly neutral news sources, and, especially in an election year, from politicians. All of these employ the rhetorical techniques developed in the proto-democratic city state of Classical Athens and refined in the rhetorical schools of the Roman Empire. In this course, we consider the function of rhetorical speech in the ancient world and the role of rhetoric in contemporary American society, with particular attention to its use in the 2016 presidential campaign. Some may be surprised to discover the continuing relevance of ancient theories of persuasion in modern times when channels for the delivery and consumption of persuasive discourse have proliferated far beyond those available to ancient rhetoricians. Writing assignments include analyses of contemporary rhetoric, including speeches, advertisements, and news coverage from the campaign, as well as exercises aimed at making our own writing more persuasive. Curtis Dozier.

**HIST-117-01: *High Middle Ages*:** This course examines medieval Europe at both its cultural and political height. Topics of study include: the first universities; government from feudal lordships to national monarchies; courtly and popular culture; manorial life and town life; the rise of papal monarchy; new religious orders and spirituality among the laity. Relations with religious outsiders are explored in topics on European Jewry, heretics, and the Crusades. Nancy Bisaha

**HIST-125-01: *Infamy on Trial: Famous Trials in Early Modern Europe*:** This course examines several of the most famous trials of Europe's early modern period (1500-1700). Each trial allows us to explore how communities and individuals responded to the changing nature of European society during this period of upheaval. Through cases involving all sorts of people—men and women, peasants and kings, we have access to conflicting understandings of authority, family, religion, and gender. The trial of Galileo challenged contemporary understandings of what it meant to be a Christian, while the execution of King Charles I raised questions about kingship. By studying criminal cases, we engage with a rich selection of primary sources, such as trial records, contemporary accounts, and private papers. Through these readings, the class investigates how early modern people interpreted crime and justice during moments of crisis. Sumita Choudhury.

**HIST-129-01: *The First World War*:** This First-Year Writing Seminar teaches the skills of college research and writing by focusing on the cultural and social history of the Great War. Students explore the diplomatic events leading to war and the July Crisis of 1914; the deployment of weapons of mass destruction, many adopted from colonial contexts; the experiences of trench warfare; colonial soldiers and the war's influence on global and mass anti-imperial movements; the relationship between home fronts and battle fronts; the war's effects on gender roles; propaganda; the 1918 pandemic and new medical approaches to shell shock, amputations, and public health. Lydia Murdoch.

**HIST-174-01: *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*:** An exploration of the Middle East over the past three centuries. Beginning with economic and social transformations in the eighteenth century, we follow the transformation of various Ottoman provinces such as Egypt, Syria/Lebanon, and Algeria into modern states, paying careful attention to how European colonialism shaped their development. We then look at independence movements and the post-colonial societies that have emerged since the middle of the twentieth century, concluding with study of colonialism's lingering power—and the movements that confront it. Joshua Schreier.

**ITAL-182-01: *Southern Italy on Page and Screen*:** It has famously been said that Sicily holds "the clue to everything" and that one can "see Naples and die." Why and how is the South, Italy's "internal other," viewed with alternating fascination and revulsion? In books and on film, Southern Italy is depicted in dramatic, contradictory, and sometimes problematic terms: as pastoral idyll, social and economic backwater, archaeological repository, land of mafia denizens, or locus of modern migration crises. As the site of intersecting, contradictory, and too-often limiting figurations, Southern Italy has a prominent and highly contested position in the modern Italian cultural and artistic imagination that has much to teach us about Italy and Italians. This course interrogates these depictions and stereotypes in literature and film through the careful unpacking of a broad range of texts and images from the 19th century to the present day. Emily Antenucci.

**LALS-104-01: *Young People, Gun Violence, and Human Rights*:** The First-Year Writing Seminar adds to students' understandings of young people, human rights, and gun violence in the United States and in Central America. In the first part of the course, students engage in the debates around gun control, school safety, and the US's failure to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, an international human rights treaty designed to protect the human rights of

young people. In the second part of the course, we examine several Central American nations where armed violence has had a dramatic impact on the lives of young people and been a contributing factor of forced displacement, loss of education, and migration to the US. An ongoing and significant consideration in the course is the role of youth-led advocacy and legislative efforts around gun control legislation, as well as safe gun education, firearm buy-back programs, and violence prevention projects. Tracey Holland.

**PHIL-173-01: *What is College For?*** In this course, we read historical and contemporary philosophical texts on education while examining the history of college education in the US and thinking about its future. Authors include Plato, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Mary Wollstonecraft, John Dewey, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Martha Nussbaum. Students research how Vassar has framed and revised its institutional mission throughout its history and develop their own arguments in response to the course title's question. There are several short writing assignments involving peer-to-peer feedback and revision, leading to a longer paper on a topic of each student's choice. Christopher Raymond.

**POLI-150-01: *Comparative Politics*:** An examination of political systems across the world chosen to illustrate different types of political regimes, states, and societies. The political system is seen to include formal institutions of government, such as parliaments and bureaucracies; political parties and other forms of group life; those aspects of the history and social and economic structure of a society that are relevant to politics; and political beliefs, values, and ideologies. Special attention is given to the question of political change and development, whether through revolutionary or constitutional process.

**Topic for 2024/25 a: *Analyzing Politics in the World*:** This course introduces how comparativists analyze politics within states in the world. Topics include state formation, democracy and dictatorship, political economy, social movements, revolution, ethnicity, and political culture. The course draws from both theoretical work and country and regional case studies that may include the US, Chile, China, India, Cuba, Great Britain, Iran, the Middle East, South Africa and East Asia. The course uses cases to analyze and compare basic concepts and patterns of the political process. Students should come away from the course with both an understanding of the diversity of the world's political systems, as well as an appreciation of the questions and concepts that inform the work of political scientists. Samson Opondo

**PSYC-108-01: *Reading and Writing in Psychological Science: Neurodiversity*:** This class looks at some of the ways in which differences in brain architecture, chemistry and wiring can impact the lives of children and young adults. Topics for reading and writing include: ADHD, the autism spectrum, and dyslexia. Nicholas de Leeuw.

**RELI-101-01: *Radical Evil: The History of Wickedness in the West*:** This course addresses a set of theological and moral questions: What does it mean to be evil? Is evil something external, foreign, and Other, or does it abide in us all? Is evil a product of circumstances, psychology, or the exercise of free will? Can the concept of evil be useful for explaining devastating phenomena such as genocide, white supremacy, and institutionalized sexual abuse? What are the intellectual

and cultural sources of the idea of evil, and how has it evolved through different moments and locations in history? Why are certain personifications of evil (demons, the Devil, heretics, monsters, witches, ghosts, racialized-Others) most visible at a given time, and what do these forms of evil say about the values and anxieties of a given culture or civilization? In this course, we investigate the different stories that get told about evil in Judaism, Christianity, and broadly across North Atlantic societies from antiquity to the present in order to defamiliarize, contextualize, and re-interpret this persistent and mysterious moral concept. Klaus Yoder.

**RELI-189-01: *Trances, Visions, Meditative States and Altered States of Consciousness:*** (Same as STS-189) This course introduces students to ways of interpreting trances, visions, religious experiences, peak experiences, and other altered states of consciousness. Readings range from first-hand accounts written by mystics and visionaries to interpretations of unusual experiences by psychologists, theologians, anthropologists, reporters, writers, philosophers, and neuroscientists. The course raises a number of questions that we consider during the semester, including—What are the best ways to describe or explain someone else’s anomalous/religious experience? How do we talk about experiences or behaviors that seem exotic, unhealthy, deviant or odd? Should we strive for “objective” scientific knowledge or seek other ways of appreciating religious insight and experience? Can scientific methods or tests explain the insights that religious or spiritual people experience? In addition to understanding basic characteristics of different types of experiences, we also address these and other controversial questions. Christopher White.

**RUSS-171-01: *Russia and the Short Story (in English):*** In this course, we read and discuss a number of classic short stories by such Russian masters of the genre as Gogol, Turgenev, Chekhov, Babel, and Olesha. Charles Arndt III.

**SOCI-112-01: *The House is on Fire!: Climate Change, Society and Environment:*** This course focuses on the challenges of global climate change in the 21st century. Our central aim is to examine the foundations of the discourse on society, and environment in order to explore two questions: how do social thinkers approach the construction of the future, and how has this construction informed the present debates on societal challenges and the environment in the age of climate change? Thus, we examine how social thought informs different articulations of policy, the limits of praxis, and its contemporary construction of alternative futures. Our focus is on the policy making process as influenced by the commodities, production and consumption, and risks related to climate change. Pinar Batur.

**SOCI-113-01: *Feminism, Life Narratives, and the Sociological Imagination:*** Auto/biographical writing is used to tell stories, make connections, build arguments, and stake political claims. But how and when do life narratives exceed the individual? In one of the most widely read sociological texts, C. Wright Mills argues that the “sociological imagination” helps us understand how the social world takes shape at the intersection of biography and history. And, feminists have long contended that the personal is not only social, “the personal is [also] political.” This first-year writing seminar examines published feminist life narratives and sociological studies—and the debates surrounding them—to illuminate how sociologists draw on life narratives as entry points into the social world. The key objectives are: 1) to develop our critical reading and listening skills,



2) to gain an appreciation for the role of curiosity, question asking, and research in sociological thinking, 3) to fine-tune our analytical writing and revision practice, and 4) to build confidence as college writers. Light Carruyo.

**STS-189-01: *Trances, Visions, Meditative States and Altered States of Consciousness:***

(Same as RELI-189) This course introduces students to ways of interpreting trances, visions, religious experiences, peak experiences and other altered states of consciousness. Readings range from first-hand accounts written by mystics and visionaries to interpretations of unusual experiences by psychologists, theologians, anthropologists, reporters, writers, philosophers and neuroscientists. The course raises a number of questions that we consider during the semester, including—What are the best ways to describe or explain someone else’s anomalous/religious experience? How do we talk about experiences or behaviors that seem exotic, unhealthy, deviant or odd? Should we strive for “objective” scientific knowledge or seek other ways of appreciating religious insight and experience? Can scientific methods or tests explain the insights that religious or spiritual people experience? In addition to understanding basic characteristics of different types of experiences, we also address these and other controversial questions. Christopher White.

## DEPARTMENTS OF INSTRUCTION AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS

### Africana Studies

Founded in 1969 out of student protest and political upheaval, the Africana Studies Program continues its commitment to social change and rigorous intellectual engagement. The Africana Studies Program draws on a range of theoretical and methodological approaches to explore the cultures, histories, institutions, and societies of African and African-descended people. The program offers a major and correlate sequences (minor) in Africana Studies, and correlates in Arabic language and culture, and prison studies.

Students interested in Africa and its Black diasporas within Africa, in the Americas, and the Caribbean should enroll in Introduction to Africana Studies (Africana Studies 100) in the spring. This is a great course for any student who would like to explore questions of power and liberation, and is required for all Africana majors and correlates. This course examines such topics as colonialism, slavery, nationalism and transnationalism, civil and human rights, race, gender and sexuality in Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, and the United States. First- year students will be particularly interested in a First-Year seminar titled Modern Arabic Literature (Africana Studies 109). For students interested in learning Arabic, we encourage you to take Elementary Arabic (Africana Studies 106) in the fall and Elementary Arabic (Africana Studies 107) in the spring. We also encourage students to consider the Self-Instructional Language Program in Swahili and Haitian Creole (see the [Self-Instructional Language Program](#) website, contact Silke von der Emde [vonderemde@vassar.edu](mailto:vonderemde@vassar.edu)). Some professors will allow first-year students to enroll

in 200 level 44 (intermediate) courses in the spring, but students should speak with the professor for information on the workload and to gain permission to enroll.

For more information on major and correlate requirements, please visit the [Africana Studies Program](#) website or email [africanastudies@vassar.edu](mailto:africanastudies@vassar.edu).

## American Studies

The American Studies Program began in 1973 as “The Program in the Changing American Culture” and was one of the earliest multidisciplinary programs to be established at Vassar. Courses draw on the broad resources of the college to explore the cultural, historical, and political processes that comprise the United States, as these take shape both within and beyond the nation’s geographical borders. An individually-designed course of study, which is the hallmark of the program, allows students to forge multidisciplinary approaches to the particular issues that interest them. For example, students have come to the American Studies Program in order to combine interests in club music and U.S. urban policy; to explore literary and geographic representations of American utopian communities; to integrate studio art with education certification; and to examine topics within Critical Ethnic Studies. The program also offers a correlate sequence in Native American Studies that enables students to examine Indigenous cultures, politics, histories, and literatures in a primarily North American context.

Of particular interest to first-year students are the welcoming and ever-evolving 100-level courses, Introduction to American Studies (American Studies 100), Introduction to Asian American Studies (American Studies 102), and Introduction to Native American Studies (American Studies 105). Beyond the introductory level, the program offers courses on the rise of U.S. consumer culture, on Native American urban experience, on Asian American women’s oral history, on gender and the civil rights movement, on subculture and resistance, on art and activism, on memory and memoir, on museums, and on emerging forms of print, digital, and audio journalism. Students exploring the major are encouraged to take the core course, Empire as a Way of Life (American Studies 250) during their sophomore year. Students with questions about the program or its courses should feel free to email the Program Director, Lisa Collins at [licollins@vassar.edu](mailto:licollins@vassar.edu), or the program’s Administrative Assistant, Melissa McAlley, at [mmcalley@vassar.edu](mailto:mmcalley@vassar.edu).

For more information, please visit the [American Studies Program](#) website.

## Anthropology

The Vassar anthropology department explores human experiences across time and space through four subfields - archaeology, biological anthropology, cultural anthropology, and linguistic anthropology. Our cultural and linguistic courses often include the reading of ethnographies, books written about one culture at one time. Ethnographies reveal the multiple ways of being human and understanding the world. Our archaeological and biological courses often include the analysis of data that reveal how past human cultures made sense of their worlds. Archaeology

focuses on the things that people have left behind, and biological anthropology explores how the body both enables and constrains our experiences. Biological anthropology also includes the study of non-human primates, our closest living relatives. At Vassar, anthropology is situated within the social sciences but our courses and faculty research combine the arts and humanities, as well as the social and natural sciences.

First-semester or first-year students are welcome to begin their exploration of anthropology in any of our 100-level courses and most 200-level courses. In the Fall semester, we usually offer the introduction to archaeology (ANTH 130) and introduction to linguistic anthropology (ANTH 150). In the Spring semester, we usually offer the introduction to biological anthropology (ANTH 120). Our introductory cultural anthropology course (ANTH 140) is usually offered both semesters, as it is required for our majors. First-year students are also welcome to begin their anthropology journey at the 200-level with the biological courses ANTH 233 Primate Behavior or ANTH 224 Race and Human Variation, with the archaeological courses ANTH 233 Museums, Collections, and Ethics or ANTH 236 Native North America, with the cultural courses ANTH 243 Mesoamerican Worlds, ANTH 244 Indian Ocean, or ANTH 262 Myth, Ritual and Symbol, or with the linguistic courses ANTH 250 Language, Culture and Society or ANTH 255 Language, Gender, and Media. Additional course options are offered under ANTH 240 Cultural Localities and ANTH 260 Current Themes.

A major in anthropology includes 10 course units and 1 unit of intensives. Current intensives include subfield-specific experiences in ANTH 213 Indigenous Environmental Activism, ANTH 211 Virtual Anthropology, ANTH 216 Language Revitalization, and ANTH 285 Global Indigenous Film. All subfields of anthropology can be explored in the intensive ANTH 202 Anthropological Approaches. Anthropology majors complete the sequence of ANTH 140, 201, 301 and select additional coursework with the guidance of their advisor. A correlate in anthropology includes 6 course units, with flexibility to focus in one subfield or multiple. Students specifically interested in biological anthropology may consider the Biology and Culture correlate, which combines 6 courses in Biology and Anthropology.

For more information, please visit the [Anthropology Department](#) website or email the current department chair, Dr. Colleen Cohen, at [cocohen@vassar.edu](mailto:cocohen@vassar.edu) or our administrative assistant, Deanna Johnson, at [anthropology@vassar.edu](mailto:anthropology@vassar.edu). Upcoming events are also advertised through our Facebook and Instagram accounts.

## Art

The Art Department offers courses in art history, studio art and architecture. Creativity has long been measured by the work of art and architecture. The subject is vast. Art 105 and Art 106 provides a two-semester introduction to this history of art and architecture. Opening with the global present, Art 105 uses today's digital universe as a contemporary point of reference to earlier forms of visual communication. Faculty presentations explore the original functions and creative expressions of art and architecture, shaped through varied materials, tools and technologies. Art 106 continues exploration of an accelerating global exchange of images and

ideas from Michelangelo in the High Renaissance to contemporary architecture and video. Students see how the language of form changes over time and how it continually expresses cultural values and addresses individual existential questions. Each week, students attend three lectures and a discussion section, which makes extensive use of the Vassar College collection in the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center. The course furnishes many points of entry into the entire spectrum of human accomplishment. Art history is, by its nature, transdisciplinary—drawing on pure history, literature, music, anthropology, religion, linguistics, science, psychology, and philosophy. Over the years, Vassar students from every major have found it to be vital to them in ways that they could never have predicted. Art 105 and Art 106 can be taken as stand-alone courses. Electing both semesters of Art 105 and Art 106 in chronological sequence is strongly recommended, but each may be taken individually or in the order that fits a student's schedule.

Studio art classes offer students the opportunity to think visually in 2D, 3D, and moving images while learning to participate in conversations in contemporary art. The aim of the studio courses is to impart modes of thinking and problem-solving relevant to a variety of intellectual undertakings through the production of works of art. Students learn to talk about and respond to other's work, thinking through observations and making connections across disciplines. Courses in drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, printmaking, color, digital art, video, and architectural design are open to art majors, correlates and non-majors. Drawing I: Visual Language (Art 102 and Art 103) is a year-long class that is the prerequisite for intermediate and advanced studio art courses. It is appropriate for students with all levels of drawing experience. Many beginning students come away from the class with more drawing ability than they ever imagined and more experienced students learn to think about drawing in a new way. Emphasis is placed on perceptual drawing from life as the course explores a broad range of subjects, media and ideas. Color (Art 108) is also open to first-year students. Studio courses meet four hours per week for one unit of credit. There is a lab fee for studio classes, but all students who receive Vassar scholarships are eligible for a stipend that covers the cost of most materials.

For more information, please visit the [Art Department](#) website.

## Asian Studies

The Program in Asian Studies introduces you to a multidisciplinary and global approach to studying the peoples and cultures of Asia, examining both traditional Asian societies and their transformations in recent times. The program offers a major and a correlate sequence (minor) in Asian Studies and a correlate sequence in Asian American Studies. Majors and correlates work closely with advisors to design their program of study. Majors typically choose two disciplines and focus on a particular Asian country or region while also learning about other Asian societies. The program has 24 faculty members who teach a broad range of courses. The gateway course to the program is Asian Studies 194: Asia in the World. This team-taught course will provide students with an overview of compelling issues in the field, as well as an opportunity to conduct an independent research project on a topic that interests them. Other courses in Asian Studies available to first-year students include The Making of Modern East Asia (HIST/ASIA158), Yoga: A Twisted History (RELI/ASIA180), Introduction to Asian American Studies (ASIA/AMST102),

Introduction to Chinese and Japanese Literature (CHJA 120), and Buddhists, Daoists and Confucians (RELI/ASIA 152).

Students interested in the Asian Studies major or study abroad in an Asian country should begin language study in their first year if possible. Vassar offers classroom instruction in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, with Hindi and Turkish available through the Self-Instructional Language Program. The Asian Studies correlate sequence encourages, but does not require, language study.

For more information, please visit the [Asian Studies Program](#) website or email Professor Fubing Su, director of Asian Studies, at [fusu@vassar.edu](mailto:fusu@vassar.edu).

## Astronomy

(see Physics and Astronomy)

## Biology

Vassar's biology curriculum allows students to explore the breadth of the life sciences, to focus on a wide variety of subjects in depth, and to gain experience in research. A major in biology prepares students for graduate study in a variety of disciplines and for a broad array of careers, including biological and biomedical research, biotechnology, conservation and environmental work, education, journalism, medicine, and the related health professions. We also offer the possibility of pursuing a correlate sequence in biology, which includes our two introductory courses and four courses of more advanced work. The correlate sequence is described in more detail in the catalog.

First-year students may take biology for a number of reasons; to begin a major in biology or a related field, to broaden a liberal arts education, or to explore scientific, biomedical, or environmental interests. We offer two introductory courses: Biology 107 and Biology 108. Neither is a survey course, and neither is a repetition of high school AP Biology. In Biology 107, students explore energy flow in biological systems, develop their understanding of central concepts of biology, and enhance their critical thinking and communication skills. In Biology 108, students learn about information flow in biological systems. Accompanying Biology 108 is a stand-alone laboratory experience where students conduct laboratory and field investigations, develop their abilities to observe, formulate, and test hypotheses, design experiments, collect and interpret data, and communicate results.

Students with an AP Biology exam score of 5 or an International Baccalaureate (IB) Biology HL exam score of 6 or 7 may choose to place out of Biology 107. Students must confirm their AP or IB Biology credit with the Coordinator for Biology 108, Dr. Mary Ellen Czesak ([maczesak@vassar.edu](mailto:maczesak@vassar.edu)). Students who completed AP Biology, IB Biology, or other advanced courses and either did not take an exam or did not score high enough to place out of Biology 107

may opt to take a departmental placement exam. Any questions related to placement in Biology courses should be directed to Dr. Czesak.

Both Biology 107 and Biology 108 are prerequisites for 200-level biology courses. If you are contemplating a major in biology or a related field, it is strongly advised to start this 100-level course sequence sometime in your first year or in the fall of your sophomore year. Students planning to major in biology or biochemistry are also advised to complete Chemistry 125 in the first year. Students considering medical careers should consult the section on “Preparation for Medical School” in this handbook.

For more information, please visit the [Biology Department](#) website or contact the Biology Department chair, Nancy Pokrywka (845-437-7441, [napokrywka@vassar.edu](mailto:napokrywka@vassar.edu)), or Mary Ellen Czesak ([maczesak@vassar.edu](mailto:maczesak@vassar.edu)).

## Biochemistry

(also see Biology and Chemistry)

Biochemistry is an interdepartmental program of the Biology and Chemistry Departments. The program provides a broad and deep foundation in biology and chemistry as a basis for studying the molecular aspects of biological phenomena. The program progresses from introductory to advanced coursework in biology and chemistry and culminates in integrative coursework in biochemistry and a biochemistry-related intensive experience in the senior year.

Students should feel free to contact the program director, Zachary Donhauser ([zadonhauser@vassar.edu](mailto:zadonhauser@vassar.edu)), or any of the affiliated faculty members from the biology and chemistry departments to ask questions about which courses to consider in their first year.

- Chemistry 125 is required for the major and is offered both semesters. CHEM 121 can be taken as the first course if you have little or no previous chemistry experience. See the section on “Chemistry” for more information on these courses. If you are considering studying abroad your junior year, it is important that you take CHEM 125 at some point in your first year so you can take the year-long organic chemistry sequence your second year.
- Introductory Biology 107 and 108 are required for the major and must be taken in numerical order. Both courses are offered both semesters, so you can start the sequence in either the fall or the spring. For information on these courses and about the possibility of placing out of BIOL 107 and 108, see the section on “Biology.” If you don’t get into BIOL 107 your first year, it is still possible to complete the biochemistry major on time.
- Although not required for the major, calculus and introductory physics are recommended for upper-level biochemistry courses, so students may consider taking these courses in their first few years at Vassar.

For more information, please visit the [Biochemistry Program](#) website or email the program



director Zachary Donhauser ([zadonhauser@vassar.edu](mailto:zadonhauser@vassar.edu)).

## Chemistry

Chemistry is the study of the composition, structure, properties, and reactions of matter. A major in chemistry at Vassar provides preparation for graduate study in chemistry or related areas, such as medicine, environmental science, materials science, public health, forensics and toxicology, and is also excellent training for future teachers, lawyers, and individuals working in business, industry, or a laboratory setting.

There are two chemistry courses that can be taken during the first year: Chemistry 121 and Chemistry 125. The course a student elects will depend on their background in chemistry. Chemistry 121, Chemical Fundamentals, is open to all students with limited or no background in chemistry. This course is designed to provide the fundamentals of chemistry in the context of an instructor-specific theme. Students may take this course to be exposed to chemistry and the theme chosen, to meet the QA requirement, and/or to continue from this course into Chemistry 125, Chemical Principles. Chemistry 121 does not have an associated laboratory and does not count toward the Chemistry major. Chemistry 125, Chemical Principles, is designed to cover the important aspects of general chemistry in one semester and is appropriate for students who have previously studied chemistry.

Students who have taken AP or Honors Chemistry and done reasonably well should generally elect Chemistry 125. Students with limited exposure to chemistry but strong mathematical problem-solving skills should also elect Chemistry 125. Students wishing to continue in the Chemistry Department must take CHEM 125; this course is offered in both the fall and spring semesters, usually with less demand in the spring. The Chemistry Department offers a written examination to incoming first-year students interested in advanced course placement into Organic Chemistry (Chemistry 244/245). This placement is only granted in exceptional circumstances. Please consult the department for further information.

Students wishing to major in Chemistry usually take CHEM 125 (with or without CHEM 121) in their first year and the Organic Chemistry sequence (CHEM 244 and 245) in their sophomore year. It is recommended that students take the Integrated Chemistry Laboratory (CHEM 372/373) in their junior year, alongside other 200- or 300-level courses.

It is strongly recommended that students have a foundational understanding of single- variable calculus, classical mechanics, and electromagnetism. Students considering majoring in chemistry or going on to graduate school in the sciences should consult the department about electing the appropriate calculus and physics courses during the first and sophomore year. Basic knowledge of linear algebra and multivariable calculus is also recommended

Students who plan to complete pre-medical requirements, graduate in less than four years, undertake an international study abroad experience, complete the Dartmouth engineering or the

Columbia MPH dual-degree programs, or graduate with a degree certified by the American Chemical Society should consult with a department advisor in their first semester.

An essential aspect of training in chemistry is the experience of independent laboratory work and research. The Chemistry Department, therefore, provides students the opportunity to use sophisticated instrumentation at all levels of the curriculum and encourages student participation in independent research as early as the second semester of the first year. First-year students may work on a research project under the direction of a member of the department by electing Independent Research (Chemistry 198) after consultation with a faculty mentor and/or filling out the form available during preregistration on the department's website.

For more information, please visit the [Chemistry Department](#) website or email [chemistry@vassar.edu](mailto:chemistry@vassar.edu).

## Chinese and Japanese

The Department of Chinese and Japanese is committed to helping students prepare as early as possible for their post-graduation endeavors ranging from graduate studies to careers in both public and private sectors that require Chinese or Japanese linguistic and/or literary and cultural proficiency. The department offers two majors: Chinese and Japanese. In addition, it offers a correlate sequence in Chinese, a correlate sequence in Japanese, and a correlate sequence in Chinese and Japanese Literary and Cultural Studies. Jointly with the Department of Education, the department also offers programs leading to NY State Initial Adolescent Education Certificate (grades 7-12) in both Chinese and Japanese. The department provides four levels of language instruction in Chinese and four levels in Japanese, as well as a wide range of literature and culture courses including poetry, fiction, drama/theater, film, popular culture, linguistics, and literary theory.

First-year students intending to study Chinese or Japanese with no previous training in Chinese or Japanese are advised to start in their first year and may elect the year-long Chinese 105-106 or Japanese 105-106, both of which fulfill the foreign language proficiency requirement of the college. First-year students with some but limited knowledge of Chinese may be placed in Chinese 107-108, the advanced elementary course. First-year students with even better knowledge of Chinese or Japanese may be placed directly in intermediate or higher courses based on the placement test results. The placement tests are administered in the department during New Student Orientation. The department does not automatically honor the level of students' language proficiencies indicated in the courses or examinations they took in high school or other pre-matriculation programs. Students must take the placement test to be placed in an appropriate level of Chinese or Japanese.

Also available to first-year students are courses taught in English: Introduction to Chinese and Japanese Literature (Chinese-Japanese 120), or, with special permission from the instructor, Chinese or Japanese literature or culture courses at the 200 level. Students who are considering a major or double major in Chinese or Japanese are strongly urged to begin their language study



in their first year, continuing with intermediate or advanced language courses in their sophomore and junior years. Students may accelerate the course of their language study by studying at approved summer language programs. Two years of language study are required for students who plan to study in China or Japan during their junior year, so starting the language study early is important. The department places students in strong study-abroad programs.

Among the department's on-campus activities are annual events such as Chinese and Japanese Culture Day, Chinese New Year Celebration, and Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival, each of which enriches the students' language and cultural experiences. Students can also benefit from participation in the weekly Chinese or Japanese language table, during which conversations with native speakers and other Chinese or Japanese cultural activities are held.

For more information, please visit the [Chinese and Japanese Department](#) website, or email [chineseandjapanese@vassar.edu](mailto:chineseandjapanese@vassar.edu).

## Classics or Classical Studies

(see Greek and Roman Studies)

## Cognitive Science

We human beings take it for granted that we are possessed of minds. You know that you have a mind, and you assume that other people do, too. But to what, exactly, are we referring when we talk about a mind? Is there more to your mind than brain activity? How are you able to experience music from sound waves, relish the taste of chocolate, have a conversation with friends, reach for your cup when you want a sip of coffee, and make decisions about your future? How similar is your mind to the minds of other people and other animals? Do you have to be a biological organism to have a mind, or can we build a machine with intelligence and consciousness? If so, how? These are the kinds of questions that cognitive scientists want to address.

If these questions sound interesting to you, Introduction to Cognitive Science (Cognitive Science 100) is our foundational course and is open to all students. Cognitive science is a broadly multidisciplinary field that has emerged at the intersection of a number of older disciplines, including philosophy, computer science, psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, linguistics, biology, and mathematics. The major offers a core set of courses that teach students how to think in an integrative fashion about perception and action, knowledge and cognition, language, and multidisciplinary research methods. The major also requires that students find applications of these ideas in other areas of the curriculum, from the arts and humanities to the social and natural sciences.

Vassar offered the first undergraduate major in cognitive science in the world. Distinctive aspects of the program include the number of integrative courses offered in cognitive science itself, especially the intermediate level and laboratory course offerings, and the commitment to balanced

coverage of the main topics and perspectives that characterize the current state of this rapidly changing field. In their senior year, majors complete an original research project of their own design. Opportunities are available for students to participate in faculty research.

For more information, visit the [Cognitive Science Department](#) website.

## College Course

The College Course Program provides an opportunity to study important questions and themes outside the confines of a specific department or program. Recent 100-level College Courses have included “The Liberal Arts in Question,” “Anti-Racist Equity and Justice: Learning and Activism,” “Vassar for Veterans,” and “Communities are Critical: A Multimedia Project in Storytelling.”

This year, the program offers a new course, “**Navigating College: Essential Skills for First-Year Students**,” which provides first-year students with the tools, resources, and strategies to successfully navigate the transition to college. Please check the online catalog for further descriptions of offerings in the College Course Program.

## Computer Science

The Computer Science Department at Vassar College offers students the opportunity to delve into the fundamental principles and applications of Computer Science. Embracing the ethos of a liberal arts education, our department aims to equip students to be engaged citizens capable of effecting positive change in our highly technological modern world. Moreover, we prepare students for careers in industry, academia, and related fields.

The department offers three course options for incoming first-year students. For any placement questions, please consult the department during departmental advising. Here is some general advice for students wishing to preregister in a computer science course:

### **CMPU-100: Programming with Data**

Highly recommended for students with no programming background, CMPU-100 serves as an entry point into Computer Science. It is also suitable for students interested in Data Science, with a focus on developing data literacy through hands-on problem-solving.

### **CMPU-101: Problem Solving and Abstraction**

Recommended for students with some programming experience or who are thinking about a possible major in Computer Science. CMPU-101 introduces object-oriented software design and abstraction. This course is a prerequisite to the other 100-level Computer Science courses that are required for the major or correlate.

### **CMPU-102: Data Structures and Algorithms**

Recommended for students who have earned a 4 or 5 on the AP Computer Science A exam, with permission of the department. Otherwise, CMPU-101 is the only prerequisite for CMPU-102. This course introduces the canonical data structures and algorithms that are essential to modern computing.

### **CMPU-145: Foundations of Computer Science**

Recommended for students who have earned a 4 or 5 on the AP Computer Science A exam, with permission of the department. Otherwise, CMPU-101 is the only prerequisite for CMPU-145. CMPU-145 introduces functional programming to illuminate the important connections between recursive data structures, recursive functions, and (structural) induction.

First-year students are strongly advised to only take one Computer Science course in their first semester.

Special note for Fall 2024 and Spring 2025: Due to curricular changes, students coming into the fall semester with a 4 or 5 on the AP CS A exam who are planning on taking CMPU-102 should wait until the spring semester. However, they may take CMPU-145 in the fall semester.

The department provides access to all necessary computing equipment, including laboratories featuring Linux workstations, available 24/7 to all students enrolled in departmental courses.

Additionally, there are two different ways students can work in the department as a part of their work-study. After completing a computer science course, students can apply to be a coach. Coaches hold office hours for students to ask questions and help professors administer the labs. After declaring a major, students may also have the opportunity to engage with faculty on ongoing research projects in several areas of the field, both during the academic year and over the summer.

For more information, including up-to-date advanced placement rules, please visit the [Computer Science Department](#) website or email [csdept@vassar.edu](mailto:csdept@vassar.edu).

## **Dance**

The Dance department at Vassar is strongly committed to the arts and nurtures a vibrant community that enables students to combine their passion for dance with their intellectual pursuits. We welcome students at every level of experience, from beginners through advanced. Courses are open to all students and may be taken for academic credit, as part of a Correlate sequence, or as an elective.

Two Dance correlates are offered: *Dance Performance*, with a focus on technique classes, performance opportunities, and choreography courses; and *Dance Studies*, which considers dance more broadly and investigates its place in society through cross-disciplinary work. Courses are taught by four full-time faculty and five part-time faculty, a resident lighting designer/technical

director, and three piano accompanists. Located in Kenyon Hall, the Dance Department's facilities include four dance studios and the Frances Daly Fergusson Dance Theater, which seats 242.

Vassar's primary dance company, Vassar Repertory Dance Theatre (VRDT), performs throughout the year and may be taken for academic credit. Auditions are held annually on the first Saturday of the fall semester. VRDT is a yearlong commitment. The repertoire includes existing works in jazz, modern dance, and classical ballet, as well as new creations by guest choreographers, faculty, and students.

The technique courses offered are beginner through advanced Modern dance, four levels of Ballet, Hip Hop (fall), and Jazz (spring). In addition to the technique courses, the department offers courses in composition, improvisation, and movement analysis. Master classes, residencies and lectures by visiting guest artists complement the curriculum and connect students to the professional dance community. At the end of each semester, Dance department performances showcase student dancers and choreographers.

Details on all courses may be found in the catalog. For placement or special permission signatures, consult the appropriate individual faculty member. For further information, call the Dance Office at 845-437-7470 or visit the [Dance Department](#) website.

## Drama

Drama majors study all aspects of theater, from performance studies and history to performing and stagecraft. We strongly believe that theory and practice are inseparable. Our production environment serves as a laboratory space to test the complex learning, analytical and critical thinking, and collaborative, embodied practices that are taught in the classroom. We offer a breadth of material across our curriculum: classical and contemporary drama; global performance traditions; design fields such as costumes, scenic, and lighting; playwriting and dramaturgy; acting, directing, and devising. We aspire for our students to be well-rounded, collaborative theater-makers who are confident in multiple facets of the study and practice of theater.

Opportunities for first-year students include Drama 102 (Introduction to Theater-Making), Drama 103 (Introduction to Stagecraft), and Drama 104 (The Acting Company), as well as the possibility of auditioning for and participating in Drama 200 (Production) during the spring semester. The department regularly produces a diverse season, which may include both prominent and lesser-known works from the history of dramatic literature, contemporary works, musical theater, original student-written work, and work with a global or diasporic vision. As part of the curriculum, participation in production is considered coursework and is therefore undertaken for credit.

The Drama Major is 11 units to complete. In addition to Drama 102 and 103, all majors must take Drama 221 and 222 (Sources of World Drama), typically completed during the sophomore year. Besides these four courses, students may choose classes they want to take to complete the major, fulfilling distribution requirements, including courses in literature/theory/history and courses

in various production divisions. All Drama Majors must also take a 300-level seminar and an intensive in the department to complete their major requirements.

Though the Drama Department does not offer a correlate, upper-level courses are available to non-majors, often subject to the instructor's permission.

Within the production season, the department undertakes faculty-directed projects and a number of senior thesis projects. Occasionally the department hires guest artists to assist with specific projects. Our production spaces are The Martel Theater in The Vogelstein Center for Drama and Film, a traditional proscenium stage, The Hallie Flanagan Powerhouse Theater, a flexible black box space, and The Strep Studio, an intimate black box space.

For more information, please visit the [Drama Department](#) website or contact the Drama Department at [drama@vassar.edu](mailto:drama@vassar.edu) or (845) 437-5250.

## Earth Science

(GEOSCIENCE)

Earth science plays a critical role in safeguarding the lives of all beings on Earth and facilitates thinking on a global scale about environmental change. From learning the climate science necessary to respond intelligently to our climate crisis, to considering how human populations cope with geologic hazards, to helping understand our impacts on the atmosphere, hydrosphere and biosphere, study of earth science provides knowledge essential to creating an informed citizenry. Planet Earth is our home, and to live on it well, we must understand its component parts and how they function. Note that we differ from the Environmental Studies program inasmuch as we focus on the natural science of the Earth and its processes--something we view as critical for anyone interested in environmentalism.

As a visual science, we regularly go on field trips to observe geologic phenomena outdoors and frequently sponsor week-long excursions to understand recent and past geologic events such as tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, and floods. In recent years, Earth science students have studied with our earth science faculty at Big Bend National Park, Death Valley, Yellowstone, and Iceland as well as in our backyard of the Hudson Valley.

We offer several courses of particular interest to first-year students. For those seeking an in-depth introduction to major concepts of Earth science, the department recommends The Solid Earth (Earth Science 151) and The Fluid Earth (Earth Science 153), both of which fulfill the college's quantitative analysis requirement. Other introductory courses include Field Geology of the Hudson Valley, and a first-year writing seminar on geohazards such as earthquakes and volcanoes, hot topics in and the media, and environmental justice and the Anthropocene.

Beyond the introductory level, intermediate and upper-level courses in earth science focus on Earth history; mass extinctions; Earth surface processes that sculpt landforms; minerals, rocks, sediments and soils; biogeochemistry; plate tectonics and the earth's interior, oceanography; the history of climate change; and water resources. Our courses prepare students to undertake

research both during the academic year and in the summer. Examples of current research include studies of microplastics in water and sediments, climate change in the Hudson Valley, impacts of urbanization on stream water quality, changing ocean chemistry in relation to climate change, the magma plumbing that feeds explosive volcanic eruptions, and low-temperature transformation of rocks in geothermal wells. Earth science majors have gone on to careers in law, public health, medicine, mapping, museum design, academia, science writing, renewable energy research, geological consulting, and natural hazard risk mitigation, to name a few.

Details regarding courses as well as requirements for majoring or electing a correlate sequence can be found in the catalog. Note that the Earth Science and Geography department also houses the College's Climate Change correlate sequence (equivalent to a minor).

We encourage curious students to email the associate chair of the department, Jill Schneiderman, [schneiderman@vassar.edu](mailto:schneiderman@vassar.edu), and to visit the [Department of Earth Science and Geography](#) website.

## Earth Science and Society

The challenges presented by climate change, resource conflicts, and natural disasters point to the importance of studying the intersection of earth processes and human societies. The interdisciplinary Earth Science and Society major draws on the two allied disciplines housed in the department of Earth Science and Geography. From earth science, students gain an understanding of natural processes that govern resources such as water, fossil fuels, and soil, and also examine hazards that impact human settlements, such as flooding, landslides, and earthquakes. From geography, students learn about social science approaches to human-environmental interactions, such as political ecology, world systems, socio-nature, placemaking, symbolic landscapes, and the production of space, in order to analyze power relations and social justices among places and peoples.

Students follow a focused series of Earth Science and Geography courses, normally within one of two general themes: physical geography or land and resource analysis. First-year students interested in exploring the Earth Science and Society major should take one of the introductory Earth Science courses such as Solid Earth (ESCI 151) or Fluid Earth (ESCI 153) and Global Geography: People, Places, and Regions (GEOG 102). Students majoring in Earth Science and Society take roughly half their major sequence in earth science and half in geography.

For further information, visit the [Department of Earth Science and Geography](#) website.

## Economics

Economic forces shape many aspects of society and profoundly influence our daily lives. The study of economics at Vassar deepens students' understanding of these forces and helps equip them for positions of leadership in today's world. Whatever their intended majors, students will

find exposure to the topics and methods of economics to be valuable. It will sharpen their reasoning skills, broaden their acquaintance with important economic issues, and deepen their understanding of government policies, business behavior, and personal decision-making. A good background in economics helps open doors to careers in a variety of fields including finance, law, public policy, international affairs, and the media. Students should also note that introductory economics is frequently a prerequisite for courses that are an integral part of multidisciplinary programs of study.

The study of economics at Vassar begins with Introduction to Economics (Economics 102) which introduces students to the national economy and to the function of markets in the economic system. In 2024/25 there will be 8 sections of Economics 102 offered in the fall semester and only two in the spring semester. Students wishing to take this course in 2024/25 should consequently endeavor to do so in the fall semester. Those who wish to continue in economics may then take a 200-level elective in the spring semester. Students should be mindful of the calculus prerequisites for Economics 201 and Math 241.

A typical path through the major will see a student taking Economics 102 and possibly a 200-level elective in their first year in addition to ensuring that they will have the prerequisites for second-year work. Economics 200, 201, 203 and Math 241 (a prerequisite for Economics 203) are usually taken in the second year, although Economics 203 can be taken in the third year. Students intending to study economics during their junior year abroad, however, should take Economics 200, 201, and 203 by the end of their second year.

Students whose transcripts indicate that they have received Vassar College credit for both AP microeconomics and macroeconomics or for IB economics need not take Economics 102 to complete the economics major and will be considered to have taken that class for prerequisite purposes.

First-year students may not take Economics 200, 201, or 203 but they may take other courses numbered 200 and above in their first semester with instructor approval, or in the second semester provided they have satisfied the prerequisite requirements.

Potential Economics majors with AP or IB credit in mathematics should see the “Mathematics and Statistics” section below for placement advice.

For more information, please visit the [Economics Department](#) website.

## Education

The major in Educational Studies challenges students to think deeply and critically about the ways in which schools socialize as well as educate citizens. It provides ongoing opportunities for conceptual integration across disciplines and domains of theory, policy, and practice. This interdisciplinary approach encourages students to study the impact of political, historical, cultural, economic, and social forces on education. Requirements for the major in Educational Studies press students to develop a solid foundation in learning theory, the social foundations of education, as well as a global perspective on education. Individuals who complete a major in



Educational Studies are prepared to integrate and apply knowledge to guide personal action and development, regardless of their ultimate career trajectory. The major is an excellent option for students who are interested in issues related to education—but who are not planning to earn a teaching credential at Vassar.

The teacher preparation programs in the Department of Education reflect the philosophy that a broad liberal arts education is the best foundation for teaching, whether at the elementary or secondary level, and whether in public or private schools. See the section on “Preparation for Teacher Certification” earlier in this handbook for further information.

The Educational Studies correlate is offered both to students who plan to teach and those who are interested in pursuing other pathways related to education. Under the supervision of a member of the department, students undertaking the correlate will design a sequence of courses that address a central topic or theme related to education. Completing these courses should challenge students to think comprehensively about the manner in which schools socialize as well as educate citizens, and how the interests of certain stakeholders are privileged or neglected.

The Education Department, in conjunction with University College, Galway, offers a one-semester internship in the primary and secondary schools of Clifden, Ireland.

For more information, please visit the [Education Department](#) website.

## English

The Art of Reading and Writing (English 101) is open only to first-year students and offers an introduction to the study of English at the college level. In this course, we study literature as the formal and inventive representation of experience in poetry, fiction, and drama--as well as nonfiction writing, including essays, journals, and letters. We also attend to the social and historical contexts within which literary forms arise and change. The focus of English 101 varies, but each section includes substantial reading in more than one genre, regular exercise in expository writing, literary criticism, and active discussion.

In addition to English 101, the department offers Texts and Contexts (English 170), which is open to first-year students, sophomores, and others by permission. We recommend that first-years take English 101 in the fall; however, students who receive a 4 or 5 on the AP examination in English Language and Composition or English Literature and Composition or who receive an IB diploma may elect English 170 in the fall semester. Please be advised that the college requires all first-years to take a First-Year Writing Seminar (FWS) like English 101. English 170 is an introduction to methods of literary analysis, which focuses on the development of skills for research and writing in English; it is excellent preparation for an English or humanities major. Authors, genres, approaches, and themes vary from year to year.

We offer another spring course, Literature X (English 105-51), for first-year students and sophomores. This is a team-taught introductory course that provides a 100-level English option for



both non-majors and majors that showcases the power of literary and cultural study. It demonstrates in practice why historical literary and cultural contexts are crucial elements for understanding contemporary texts and the questions they care about. Through a team-teaching model, it shows students how the expertise of faculty members across the department speaks to each others' chosen canons and questions. Authors, genres, critical and theoretical approaches, historical coverage, and themes may vary from year to year. The course meets once a week for a two-hour period consisting of a lecture followed by a meeting of smaller discussion groups. It meets once a week for a one-hour writing lab.

Topic for 2024/25b: Passing. This course focuses on “passing” and performance in relation to gender and race. As a team-taught course with an interactive lecture component, it combines the three professors' expertise on passing and racial melodrama (as well as queer of color critique), Shakespeare and performance theory, and gender-nonconformity in eighteenth-century and Romantic literature. The syllabus spans different literary traditions and media, from crossdressing actors in Shakespeare's time (to modern productions in which women actors are cast in “male” roles), to eighteenth-century “female husbands,” to racial melodrama and contemporary drag culture. Theorizing how to “do” the history of gender and sexuality—and looking at how that question shifts and moves with the imperatives of intersectionality—is a primary question motivating the course. The topic of “passing” brings the instructors' work and research interests into conversation in a way that will productively cross the boundaries of time period and national tradition.

Those who have taken English 101 in the fall semester and who wish to continue in English are advised to elect English 105 in the spring of their first year or English 170 in the fall of their sophomore year. Students may not elect English 101, English 105, and/or English 170 in the same semester nor take any of these courses twice.

AP and IB students may take a fall English 170 in lieu of an English 101; however, the college requires that students take a first-year writing seminar, which may be taken in another department. They may also seek placement in a 200-level course in the fall semester with the permission of the instructor. However, they must choose from a list of approved courses, which will be made available at the English AP & IB advising meeting during orientation. First-year students with an IB diploma or AP scores of 4 or 5 may also elect, with the permission of the instructor, a 200-level course in the spring.

The department's fall 200-level creative writing classes are not open to first-year students, even those with a 4 or 5 on the AP examination. English 205, the gateway course in creative writing, will be available to a limited number of first years in the spring regardless of AP or IB scores. Students will be admitted by lottery (draw number, class year). The department offers some other opportunities for creative writing for first years, including our intensives. English 101 may allow for creative writing though it emphasizes expository writing.

For detailed descriptions of the English 101 (FWS) courses offered this year, please see the section of this handbook on “First-Year Writing Seminars.” For more information about English

170 and 105 and all the courses offered by the Department of English, please visit the [Department of English](#) website.

## Environmental Studies

Vassar's program in Environmental Studies is arguably the most multidisciplinary course of study on campus. Students choose two disciplinary concentrations, one of which must be a natural science and the other of which comes from the social science or arts and humanities divisions. They also take multidisciplinary courses on environmental issues offered by the program itself. Common disciplinary pairings within Environmental Studies include Geography and Biology for students interested in careers in conservation and natural resource management, Earth Science and Political Science for students interested in climate change policy, and Sociology and Chemistry for students interested in environmental impacts on public health. Graduates from the Environmental Studies Program go on to pursue graduate education and careers in these areas as well as urban ecology, environmental law, medicine, environmental education, sustainable agriculture, green architecture, marine conservation, and environmental journalism, among other fields. Approximately 40 professors from nearly every department on campus participate in the program, bringing their particular perspectives to helping students understand the complexity of environmental problems and how to respond to those problems effectively with social justice and the needs of other organisms in mind.

First-year students considering a major in environmental studies are encouraged to take Climate Solutions and Climate Careers: Finding your Place in the Climate Fight (Environmental Studies 162), The Essentials of Environmental Science (Environmental Studies 124), and/or Environmentalisms in Perspective (Environmental Studies 125). Students may also choose to get started on one of their disciplinary concentrations by enrolling in introductory level courses in those areas.

Students who are interested in declaring a major in Environmental Studies must propose their major to the program steering committee by filling out the plan of study form located on the program website and by writing a short essay to explain the rationale for the course selections the student is proposing to create the major. After approval by the steering committee, students may move on to formally declare the major with the registrar's office. A senior thesis or capstone project allows students to integrate their multidisciplinary perspectives in the final year of study.

Students who have AP or IB credit in Environmental Science should consult with the director of the Environmental Studies program to determine whether they may place out of The Essentials of Environmental Science course. If students' high school experiences included a substantial laboratory and field science component, the program sometimes allows them to take a higher level multi- or interdisciplinary science course, such as Biogeochemistry, in place of Essentials.

For further information about the program, please visit the [Environmental Studies Program](#) website. Students wishing to speak with a faculty member over the summer can contact Kirsten Menking ([kimenking@vassar.edu](mailto:kimenking@vassar.edu)), Professor of Earth Science and Environmental Studies

program director until June 30, or Alison Keimowitz ([alspodek@vassar.edu](mailto:alspodek@vassar.edu)), Professor of Chemistry and incoming director for the 2024-2026 academic years.

## Film

The Film Department offers a range of courses in film and television history and theory (including US as well as many other national cinemas), digital film production, and screenwriting. In connection with its courses, the department screens hundreds of films each year. The Vassar Library also houses a DVD collection of more than 13,000 titles, which are freely available. We encourage first-year students to use these and other resources to widen their exposure to films of all countries, styles, and time periods.

Film 175: Introduction to Screen Arts is available for first-year students and is typically offered in the spring. Two first-year writing seminars, FILM-180-01: The Screenplay as Literature and FILM-180-01: Mise-en-scene, are offered in the fall. In addition to these classes, there are many other ways to get involved in the Film Department: first-year students interested in work-study positions in the Film Department or in participating in junior and senior film projects as actors or production assistants are welcome to send an email of interest to the department administrative assistant at [film@vassar.edu](mailto:film@vassar.edu). Additionally, some departmental events and workshops (hosted by our technical staff and exploring many of the more specialized pieces of equipment we keep on hand for production courses) are open to first-years, so make sure to also join the Film Department interest list by emailing [film@vassar.edu](mailto:film@vassar.edu).

Sophomores should plan to take Film 209: World Cinema (either in the Fall or Spring semester) since this is a prerequisite for most of our courses. If planning to study abroad, students should plan to take at least one additional film studies course in their Sophomore year. An introductory course in filmmaking, Film 240: Sculpting Images in Time, or Film 241: Sound and Sight, may be taken concurrently with Film 209: World Cinema. Film 240 or Film 241 serve as prerequisites for upper-level film production courses that may be taken in the junior and senior year. We also offer several organized intensives based on both film studies and film production topics. Note that the Film Department does not accept advanced course placement for high school coursework. The Film Department's facilities in the Vogelstein Center for Drama and Film include modern classrooms with smart podia; a screening room with surround sound and 35mm and advanced digital projectors as well as DCP capability; a production studio equipped with a flexible set and a lighting grid; a room devoted to sound recording that contains a vocal booth; and multiple video editing labs.

The film equipment stockroom is known lovingly on campus as "The Womp Haus" and features an extensive inventory of 16mm, HD, and 4K cameras, portable multichannel audio recorders, lighting kits and fixtures, and grip and electric gear to help students in film production courses make the most of their projects. The Womp Haus staff maintains a lively presence on social media. More information about Womp Haus workshops and events can be found on the [Womp Haus](#) website.

For more information, please visit the [Film Department](#) website.

## French and Francophone Studies

The Department of French and Francophone Studies (FFS) offers students a global perspective on the French-speaking world through a combination of language study, critical cultural studies, historical contextualization, and linguistic and cultural immersion. The curriculum is designed to promote understanding and awareness of the language, literatures, and cultures in the French-speaking world. Graduates enjoy careers in wide-ranging fields, including teaching, translating, the arts, publishing, law, banking, management, business, government and nonprofits, the fashion industry, public relations, medicine, and curation.

Except for our First-Year Writing Seminar FFS-184 “Questions of Character,” all courses are conducted in French. Without explicit departmental permission, only students who have never studied French are permitted to enroll in the yearlong FFS-105-106, usually followed by FFS-205 (Intermediate French I). All other students should take the online placement exam before pre-registering. To access the test, visit the [French and Francophone Studies Department](#) website and follow the directions to the “emersion” platform, where you need to register in order to take the test. Students should then consult with FFS faculty during the departmental drop-in advising session during orientation. Indeed, since high school experiences vary, conferring with departmental faculty ahead of time is always the best way for students to enroll in the appropriate course. There is, however, considerable movement between courses during the add/drop period as instructors continue to advise students who might have registered for a course above or below the appropriate level. Students who remain uncertain about their level should consult with department faculty during the add/drop period.

Students are encouraged to avail themselves of all the opportunities to speak and hear French at lectures and events organized by the department and in more informal situations (bi-monthly café-conversation, French Club, French films, the French book club, conversation with the language fellows and academic interns). Two native speakers—the Language Fellows—are in residence during the entire academic year. Additionally, we employ senior academic interns and offer weekly language support or “Ateliers” to assist students with their work.

Employment opportunities allow students to use their language skills as research assistants, drill instructors, and administrative assistants. Please see the Chair and Administrative Assistant if you are interested.

Students interested in pursuing a major or correlate sequence should consult the Chair or another member of the department as early as possible. Students who receive a 4 or 5 on the AP examination may count their AP credit as 1 unit toward the FFS major or correlate. Some students elect to take an accredited summer course after their first year in order to accelerate their program. It is strongly recommended that qualified students spend one or two semesters of their junior year in France or another French-speaking country in a program accredited by Vassar College. The department website provides information on study abroad programs, including the

Vassar-Wesleyan Program in Paris. For further details, please visit the [Vassar-Wesleyan Program in Paris](#) website.

Some students double major by combining their FFS major with a major in an interdepartmental or a multidisciplinary program such as Africana Studies, Environmental Studies, International Studies, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Global Nineteenth-Century Studies, or Women, Feminist, and Queer Studies. Others combine FFS with a departmental concentration such as Biology, History, Art History, Economics, Political Science, or another language. Individually tailored majors involving French and Francophone Studies, such as comparative literature, can be created through the Independent Program. We also offer several innovative "Intensives," the descriptions of which are available in the College Catalog.

For more information, including meeting the College language requirement, please visit the [French and Francophone Studies Department](#) website or contact the FFS Administrative Assistant, Phyllis Post, at [phpost@vassar.edu](mailto:phpost@vassar.edu).

## Geography

Many of our most interesting and urgent questions today occur at the intersections of society, space, and environment. Geographers study these problems by examining uneven spatial and social distributions of power and resources. This spatial approach allows us to anchor general explanatory frameworks in the communities and environments they play out. How does climate changes affect food production, for example? How does uneven distribution of power relate to conflicts across borders? How do planners design equitable and sustainable cities?

Students learn a variety of analytical and research skills to answer questions like these. Geographers use field research to understand how theory intersects with the empirical world around us. We use mapping and GIS (geographic information systems), and cognitive geography to evaluate relationships among factors such as settlement patterns, resources, climate change impacts, or poverty.

Theoretical approaches and concepts such as political ecology, world systems, socio-nature, placemaking, symbolic landscapes, and the production of space help us understand power relations among places and peoples. If you are interested in integrative problems of society, justice, environment, planning, and policy, geography provides a disciplinary home in which to develop critical reading, writing, and analysis skills to understand these challenges.

Geography majors go on to a variety of careers, such as public policy, urban planning, businesses, environmental consulting, government agencies, community development, law, and many other fields. Among the specific skills you will learn in geography classes are critical spatial analysis, mapping and GIS; written and verbal expression; analysis of landscape, etc.

Interested first-year students should take GEOG-102, Global Geography: Place-Making in the Modern World. This course examines major contemporary issues such as the impact of

environmental changes on local communities, impacts of climate change on societies, uneven development of the global political-economic system, the implications of nation-states and borders, cultural landscapes, and differentiated urban space, as well as mapping and cartographic communication.

Depending on your interests, students may choose from a variety of 200-level courses, such as Population, Environment, and Sustainable Development (GEOG-266), Urban Geography: Space, Place, Environment (GEOG-250), GIS (GEOG-224), or Spaces of Global Capitalism (GEOG-276), or regional courses on Brazil or China. To major in Geography, students take 10 classroom units and an intensive course. Majors include Global Geography, a methods course, and three units at the 300 level. Some courses in Earth Science also count toward the major.

For further information, please visit the [Department of Earth Science and Geography](#) website.

## Geography-Anthropology

Geography and anthropology share common interests in social, cultural and symbolic landscapes, and community environmental relations at scales ranging from the body to the global. This interdepartmental major combines the perspectives of both disciplines in examining the spatial relations of societies and the cultural and environmental systems in which they develop.

The major integrates the research methods of anthropology and geography, from ethnography in anthropology, or GIS analysis and political ecology in geography. Students take courses in both departments for this major. Interested first-year students should take GEOG-102, Global Geography: Place-Making in the Modern World as well as an introductory (100-level) course in anthropology, such as ANTH-130, Archaeology's Lessons from the Past; ANTH-120, The Human Animal; or ANTH-140, Cultural Anthropology. The 140 cultural course is required for the Geo-Anth major.

Requirements for a concentration include 10 classroom units with one intensive from either department and at least 5 units in each. The 11 units include the two introductory courses (GEOG-102 and ANTH-140), at least 4 units at the 300 level (GEOG-304 is required), a methods course in both geography and anthropology, and ANTH-201, Anthropological Theory.

For further information, see the [Department of Earth Science and Geography](#) website.

## Geology

(see Earth Science)

## German Studies

The Department of German Studies offers an integrated and holistic approach to the study of language, literature, and culture. This approach embodies Vassar's liberal arts principle of "going to the source" by engaging with primary documents and by exploring the fundamental debates and processes that have shaped German culture and its relationship to the contemporary world. Germany's location at the intersection between eastern and western Europe, as well as the size of its economy, continues to make German an advantageous language in today's global world, even as Germany's history and cultural developments continue to pose important questions for our contemporary society.

The department's faculty has developed an innovative curriculum that redefines what language study means. In particular, the department seeks to provide students with intellectual engagement at all levels of the curriculum. Thus, rather than merely memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary, the department's language courses are organized around a sophisticated study of engaging topics that facilitate language learning, such as childhood (Beginning German), contemporary identity (Intermediate German I), and media politics. Because the department's faculty participates actively in many of the college's multidisciplinary programs, German Studies courses feature interdisciplinary methods and topics. Finally, the relatively small size of the program enables an individualized course of study in which students develop close working relationships with faculty members. The department also offers study-abroad opportunities through its close and long-standing association with the prestigious Berlin Consortium for German Studies.

Instead of a placement exam, the German Studies Department offers the following guidelines for self-placement. First-year students who have never studied German should enroll in the year-long Beginning German (German 105-106) course. Generally, students with less than two years of German in high school should enroll in German 105; students with more than two years and less than four should register for German 210; students with more than four years of high school German should enroll in German 230 or 240. Students who receive a score of 4 or 5 on the AP examination in German language or German literature should register for either German 210 or German 230/240 and should consult with the department during orientation.

In addition to these courses in German, the department also offers several courses in English translation.

The department provides additional opportunities for practicing German through an informal weekly Kaffeeklatsch, film showings, and get-togethers with our German language fellow.

For more information, please visit the [German Studies Department](#) website.

## Global Nineteenth-Century Studies

The Program in Global Nineteenth-Century Studies (GNCS) is designed to enable students to combine courses offered in several departments and programs with independent work to explore



the long nineteenth century, from the beginnings of the American Revolution to the First World War.

First-year students considering a Global Nineteenth-Century Studies major or correlate sequence should consult with the Global Nineteenth-Century Studies director or any of the members of the steering committee. The intellectual foundation for the major is best laid by taking “Revolution, Evolution, and the Global Nineteenth Century” (History/Victorian Studies/College Course 150), which is required for both the major and the correlate. Students interested in GNCS should consider as well the 100-level courses listed in the catalog under the description of the GNCS major that are wholly or substantially focused on the long nineteenth century.

Additionally, students are encouraged to take courses focused on nineteenth-century topics in Languages, Literatures, and Cultures departments, such as French and Francophone Studies, German Studies, Russian Studies, and Chinese and Japanese Studies, to broaden their global perspective. Students interested in the study of nineteenth-century art should enroll in Art 106 in their first year.

For more information, please visit [Global Nineteenth-Century Studies Program](#) website or contact the director, Jeffrey Schneider ([jeschneider@vassar.edu](mailto:jeschneider@vassar.edu)).

## **Greek and Roman Studies**

Students who study in the Greek and Roman Studies Department explore aspects of the ancient Mediterranean world with an emphasis on the cultures of Greece and Rome. At the heart of this exploration are the languages of the Greeks and the Romans, as well as their literature, history, art and architecture, philosophy, religion, politics, relations with the other peoples of the Mediterranean, and reception and interpretation by later cultures. Every student of Greek and Roman studies is using insights about the ancient world to enrich their understanding of our modern world. What emerges from the study of antiquity is an intense self-consciousness about the nature of our own assumptions, fashioned by the world in which we live—assumptions that the study of antiquity allows us to question, that we must question, in order to be able to focus our attention on the strange “otherness” of different cultures that have much to teach us.

Our foundational course, GRST-200 Antiquity Now, is offered annually. It is required of all our majors and introduces students to the study of Greek and Roman antiquity through a series of conversations about the ways in which the presence of antiquity can be felt in our world today. Students interested in learning Greek or Latin, or who have done so only briefly, should take Elementary Greek (GRST-125-126; note that this sequence begins in the spring) or Elementary Latin (GRST-145-146, a year-long course); these courses cover the essentials of grammar and include short readings from ancient texts. Those who have had two or more years of an ancient language in high school should consult with a member of the department, who may direct them to a higher-level course. Other introductions to the work of the department can be found in 101 Civilization in Question, 104 Greek Archaeology, 102 Myth, and a first-year writing seminar GRST-188 Classical Rhetoric and the 2024 Presidential Campaign. We also offer a wide variety



of other courses in translation at all levels, which vary on a yearly basis. Please consult the course catalog for the most up-to-date listings, and note that many 200-level courses do not have a prerequisite.

For more information, please visit [the Department of Greek and Roman Studies](#) website and on [Facebook](#). You are also welcome to contact Barbara Olsen, Chair of the Greek and Roman Studies Department, at [baolsen@vassar.edu](mailto:baolsen@vassar.edu).

## Hispanic Studies

The curriculum in Hispanic Studies has a twofold purpose: to teach the skills required to understand, speak, read, and write the Spanish language and to guide the student in the search for an understanding of the literatures and cultures of Latin America and Spain. Normally, all courses in the department are taught in Spanish.

Students entering Vassar with no prior experience with Spanish and who wish to begin to learn the language are welcome to enroll in the yearlong Hispanic Studies 105-106. For students with some years of study in high school, please use the following guidelines when selecting the appropriate level: with one to two years, Hispanic Studies 105-106; two to three years, Hispanic Studies 205; four or more years, Hispanic Studies 206. Heritage speakers of Spanish (i.e., students who learned from native Spanish speakers in their families) should consult with the department faculty for proper placement. Successful completion of the introductory sequence, Hispanic Studies 105-106, or of any one-semester course at a higher level suffices to meet the college language requirement. Students receive additional, one-on-one guidance about appropriate placement during New Student Orientation.

In addition to formal coursework, the department sponsors a weekly Café Sur designed for informal conversation practice and cultural activities in our lounge in Chicago Hall. The department also sponsors film festivals, lectures and multicultural celebrations (Black History month, Hispanic Heritage month and Indigenous People's Day). All activities—open to all students—are directed by the Hispanic studies Language Fellow, a recent graduate of a Spanish or Latin American or Spanish-speaking Caribbean university. The Language Fellow also assists with the conversation sections of Hispanic Studies 205.

The department sponsors a study abroad program in Madrid, Spain. The academic year program, located at the Universidad Carlos III in Madrid, is co-sponsored by Wesleyan University. This program, normally taken during the junior year, may be elected for either the semester or the full year. To qualify, students must have completed Hispanic Studies 216 or its equivalent. Courses in the Vassar-Wesleyan Program in Madrid are listed in the catalog at the end of the section on Hispanic Studies. Hispanic Studies majors are encouraged to study in a Spanish-speaking country during their Vassar career.

For more information, please visit [the Department of Hispanic Studies](#) website or email [mdapice@vassar.edu](mailto:mdapice@vassar.edu).

## History

The History Department at Vassar College has a distinguished tradition of helping students “go to the source” as they take up the craft of history. From the beginning, students learn how to examine historical problems using the rich resources of the library and presenting their findings in class discussions, presentations, and papers. All courses stress the examination of both original sources and historical interpretations. The aim throughout is to help students develop skills in independent research, critical analysis, and imaginative synthesis.

We strongly recommend that students begin with a 100-level course. First-year students, whatever their academic background, tend to find our introductory classes quite different from any history course they have taken in the past. These courses include extensive class discussion, deep engagement with original historical documents, and independent research. Different 100-level courses introduce students to the diverse histories of Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the U.S., and the modern Middle East.

Incoming Vassar history students frequently ask whether they can “place out” of 100-level courses and begin at the 200-level. Ordinarily, one 100-level history course in any field is the prerequisite for enrolling in a 200-level history class. However, students who receive a score of 4 or 5 on the AP examination in American or European history may wish to consider taking 200-level history courses. If you have such a score, and if you believe your background prepares you to enroll at the 200-level, you should consult the instructor by email or attend the first class session and ask the instructor to consider your request. If you become a history major and you received a 4 or 5 on an AP history exam (U.S., European, or World), you may count at most one AP credit toward the 11 units required for the major. AP credits cannot be used to fulfill the major’s distribution requirements. Alternatively, students who have participated in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program and have earned a score of 5, 6, or 7 on the Higher Level Examinations may count that as one of the 11 units required for the major. The department also offers a correlate sequence that permits students to combine a sequence of six history courses with a major in another discipline. More information can be found in our History Handbook, available on the History Department website. Feel free to stop by and pick up a copy, or explore the History Department website for more information about our faculty, course offerings, majors committee, department activities, and the Evalyn Clark Travel Awards for history majors.

History faculty are most willing to advise first-year students, whether or not they are considering a major. Arriving students with questions about the history program—especially prospective majors—are cordially invited to visit the department in Swift Hall and introduce themselves to the department chair, Ismail Rashid. He is best reached by email ([israshid@vassar.edu](mailto:israshid@vassar.edu)) for an appointment or consultation.

For more information, please visit the [History Department](#) website.

## Independent Program

The Independent Program exists to allow students to study a subject of interest that can only be approached in a multidisciplinary way. The Program is designed for students who can propose a cohesive course of study whose individual classes are offered at Vassar, yet cannot be pursued within departmental, interdepartmental or multi-disciplinary programs.

Prospective majors must first meet with the Director of the Independent Program by the beginning of their sophomore year before starting the process of making a formal application. The formal application may then be submitted to the Director, who will take it to the Independent Program Committee. The Independent Program Committee will then evaluate the proposal. A proposal may be accepted, sent back to the student for revisions, or denied. The Committee may suggest ways in which a student can explore an area of study through some department or program that already exists at the college. If admitted to the Independent Program, the student follows the agreed-upon course of study, culminating in the Senior Thesis, under the guidance of two Faculty Advisors from different academic departments. The variety of major concentrations is made possible first and foremost by the breadth of Vassar's curriculum, as well as, by access to courses at other institutions through various exchange programs.

For more information, please visit the [Independent Program](#) website or contact the Program's Administrative Assistant, Melissa McAlley, at [mmcalley@vassar.edu](mailto:mmcalley@vassar.edu) or the Director of the Program, Allan Clifton, at [alclifton@vassar.edu](mailto:alclifton@vassar.edu).

## International Studies

International Studies (IS) is a multidisciplinary program that allows students to design a course of study that reflects their intellectual interests and draws on courses from across the Vassar curriculum. The program's faculty come from various departments and programs, including anthropology, Asian studies, Chinese and Japanese, economics, education, environmental studies, French and Francophone studies, geography, German Studies, Hispanic Studies, history, Latin American and Latina/o studies, philosophy, political science, sociology, urban studies, and women's studies.

The IS Program encourages IS majors to engage and explore a variety of perspectives, disciplines, methodologies, and modes of storytelling. It's a great major—full of possibilities.

A student who majors in IS designs a major (in consultation with the IS faculty) that includes courses from several traditional disciplines (departments) and multidisciplinary programs. Every IS major chooses two "areas of concentration"—two departments, typically—in which they take at least two 200-level courses and one 300-level course. History, political science, geography, sociology, economics, anthropology, and education are common choices, although many students choose disciplines other than these. IS majors fulfill this major requirement in a variety of ways, depending upon the departments they choose. IS majors tend to have a social science focus, but not always. Political science is the most popular "area of concentration," followed by history,

economics, geography, sociology, and education. IS majors have had concentrations in religion, Hispanic studies, philosophy, English, and film, among others.

Every IS major is required to take International Studies 106 (the IS intro course) or Geography 102 (Global Geography), International Studies 305 (the senior seminar), and 301/302 (the senior thesis). These classes are the only International Studies courses that an IS major is required to take (although most IS majors take additional IS courses as part of their major).

IS majors are asked to submit a “major proposal” before officially declaring an IS major. (This is not an “application” but rather a plan so that each student, their advisor, and the Program Director will have a clear vision of the student’s unique IS major.)

IS majors are strongly encouraged to live and study outside of the United States at some point during their time as a Vassar student. Typically, this will be a study away program through the Office of International Programs. In recent years, IS students have lived and studied in Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, China, England, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Morocco, Madagascar, Malaysia, Uganda, Singapore, South Africa, and Spain. IS majors are strongly encouraged to achieve “competency” at (or above) the 3rd year level in at least one language other than English.

For more information, please visit the [International Studies Program](#) website, or feel free to contact the program director, Tim Koechlin, at [tikoechlin@vassar.edu](mailto:tikoechlin@vassar.edu).

## Italian

The Italian Department offers a variety of courses in Italian language, literature, cinema, and general culture. Besides achieving fluency in spoken and written Italian, through our courses students explore the debates that have shaped Italy over the centuries and its important contribution to humanistic culture. Most courses in the curriculum, from introductory language instruction to advanced seminars, are taught in Italian. First-year students with no previous experience in Italian should take the yearlong Elementary Italian (ITAL-105-106), which is an introduction to the language and culture of Italy through conversation and role-play, grammar and vocabulary study, opera, film, and television series. By the end of the course students will be able to hold conversations in Italian about daily life and cultural topics. Students with previous language study may enroll in Intermediate Italian I (ITAL-205) after taking an oral and written placement exam. Most English-language courses on Italian culture are open to first-year students. Please check the catalog for specific offerings.

Students are invited to participate in extracurricular activities organized by the department. These include the Italian Cinema Club movie screenings, game nights, cooking classes, trips to the Metropolitan Opera House, and more.

Language instruction and extracurricular activities benefit from the presence of a resident Language Fellow - a graduate student from the University of Bologna who comes to Vassar for a

year-long term during which they lead language labs, design cultural activities and work with individual students. This unique dynamic allows students to get first-hand language and cultural experience with current Italian university students.

Italian majors and correlates are encouraged to spend one or two semesters in Italy, usually during their junior year. In collaboration with Wellesley College and Wesleyan University, Vassar offers the Eastern College Consortium (E.C.Co.) Program in Bologna, Italy, where students take courses at the program center and the University of Bologna. To qualify, students must complete four semesters of Italian. Students interested in studying abroad should start studying the language in their first semester.

Italian department students often pursue double majors or correlates. Recent combinations paired Italian with Art, Biochemistry, Biology, Cognitive Science, Computer Science, History, Film, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, or with multidisciplinary programs such as International Studies, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Media Studies, Urban Studies, and Women Feminist and Queer Studies.

The department offers many opportunities for student employment, including as language drill instructors and research assistants, allowing advanced students opportunities to use their linguistic and cultural skills outside the classroom.

For more information, including meeting the college language requirement, please visit the [Italian Department](#) website or contact Simona Bondavalli, Chair of the Italian Department: [sibondavalli@vassar.edu](mailto:sibondavalli@vassar.edu).

## Japanese

(see Chinese and Japanese)

## Jewish Studies

Jewish studies offers a multidisciplinary approach to the diversity of Jewish experience. This approach involves studying the creation and reproduction of Jewish culture in multiethnic societies in the ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary worlds as well as such subjects as languages and translations, texts and images, diaspora and Zionism, law and religion, and the cultural construction of Jewish identities. While all instruction and text study is in English, the program is supported by instruction in Hebrew language from elementary through advanced levels, with opportunities to study abroad in Israel and elsewhere during the junior year. Yiddish language at the elementary and intermediate levels is available through the Self-Instructional Language Program, as is special instruction in Aramaic, the language of the Talmud. Because a large and important population of Jews in the pre-1948 era lived in the linguistic and cultural milieu of Arab lands, students may wish to consider taking advantage of the Arabic language curriculum in support of their work in Jewish studies.

Jewish studies draws upon faculty from a wide variety of departments including anthropology, Greek and Roman studies, English, geography, German studies, Hispanic studies, history, political science, psychology, art history, and religion, reflecting the multidisciplinary orientation of the field.

The program strongly recommends that students pursue one of the many options that exist for a study-away experience. Students are encouraged to begin discussions about this with their professors as soon as possible. In addition to the core courses in Jewish studies, the program is supplemented by an ample list of approved courses on topics in Jewish culture offered in the constituent disciplines of the field (consult the catalog under “Jewish Studies”). These courses, along with approved courses taken during study away, may be credited to the major or correlate sequence. Requirements for the major and correlate sequence are detailed in the catalog; in brief, students chart their own paths through the diversity of disciplinary methodologies and subject areas, establishing their own points of significant intersection, thus contributing to the definition of this field of study. No prior background in the study of Jews or Judaism, whether of a religious or cultural nature, is assumed.

For more information, please visit the [Jewish Studies Program](#) website.

## Latin

(see Greek and Roman Studies)

## Latin American and Latinx Studies

The Latin American and Latinx Studies Program provides a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Latin America and the Latinx populations of the Americas. The program emphasizes knowledge of global politics, economies, histories, cultures, and nations as theorized, imagined, and practiced in Latin America and Latinx communities. Participating faculty are drawn from the following departments: anthropology, economics, education, English, earth science and geography, Hispanic studies, international studies, history, philosophy, political science, and sociology.

The major requires eleven courses: at least one Intensive, and up to ten classroom courses, some of which may be taken during the Junior Year Abroad experience. Competency in Spanish or Portuguese is required for majors; deeper knowledge of the relevant language is recommended. The introductory course (LALS-105) and the Latin American and Latinx Studies Senior Seminar are both required, along with one course on Latin America before 1900, one in Latinx studies, and a methods course. Majors are expected to elect work above the introductory level in at least three departments and are encouraged to pursue a structured academic experience relevant to the student’s program beyond Vassar during the junior year, either in Latin America or at an appropriate domestic institution. In the senior year, majors may complete an



optional senior thesis or senior project under the guidance of two professors from different disciplines; a one-semester senior project option is also available. Students are also encouraged to enroll in independent studies, fieldwork, or Intensives in Latin American and Latinx Studies.

Latin American and Latinx Studies correlates, who also should meet the language requirement outlined above, must complete six courses, including the introductory course (LALS-105), a pre-1900 course on Latin America, the Senior Seminar, and another Latin American and Latinx Studies 300-level seminar. Offerings from three different departments should be represented in these courses, and one course from a junior year experience abroad may be counted.

First-year students interested in the program may take the introductory course (LALS-105: Conceptualizing Latin and Latinx America) offered in the spring semester. This course offers a multidisciplinary exploration of the worlds of Latin America and Latinx communities, drawing on the expertise of participating faculty in the program to introduce students to critical themes and issues that shape the realities of Latin American and Latinx worlds. Topics to be treated may include immigrant children and education, gender and development, national identities, urbanization and uneven development, revolution, indigenous rebellions and resistance, the politics of memory, plantation economies and their environmental impact, human rights education and peacebuilding, and/or questions of cultural citizenship. Prospective majors are strongly encouraged to take this course.

For more information, please visit the [Latin American & Latinx Studies Program](#) website.

## Mathematics and Statistics

Mathematics is one of the oldest learned disciplines. Statistics provides one of humanity's best ways to gain information in the face of uncertainty. Both contribute to the foundations of our understanding of much of the physical world, and they are essential for the study of modern developments in the social sciences. Our graduating majors are very much in demand in teaching, the business world, and the computing professions. A strong background in mathematics and statistics also increases an applicant's chances of admission to law and medical schools and to graduate programs in engineering, economics, and business management. Mathematics and statistics are essential for graduate programs in computer science, economics, and the physical sciences.

The department offers a number of course sequences for first-year students. For any questions of placement, please consult the department during the departmental drop-in advising sessions.

**If you are interested in calculus**, please use the following guide to select a course:

- **Students who have taken little or no calculus** should preregister for Math 121 (Single Variable Calculus), which begins with first principles. Students planning to major in the sciences or mathematics/statistics should take Math 121 followed by Math 125 during their first year.

- **Students who received a score of 1 or 2 on an AP Calculus exam** might also select Math 121 but should consult with the department. **Students who received a score of 3 on the AP Calculus AB exam** should preregister for Math 125 (Topics in Single Variable Calculus), which is the second semester in our calculus sequence.
- **Students who received a score of 4 on the AP Calculus AB exam** should preregister for Math 127 (Calculus IIB: Sequences and Series). Math 127 is a 6-week course that is offered in the second half of the semester.
- **Students who received a score of 5 on the AP Calculus AB exam or 3 on the AP Calculus BC exam** might preregister for Math 127 to shore up their knowledge of sequences and series before moving on to the 200-level. They might also preregister for Math 220 (Multivariable Calculus) but should consult with the department before making this choice.
- **Students who received a score of 4 or 5 on the AP Calculus BC exam** should preregister for Math 220.
- **Students who took an AP Calculus course in high school but did not take the exam and students who took a non-AP calculus course** should consult with the department. Depending on their situation, they might preregister for Math 125, Math 127, or Math 220.
- **Students with an unusual background or any other concerns should confer with the department.**

Math 121/125 (or the equivalent) is a prerequisite for all 200-level mathematics courses. The department also offers Math 126 (Calculus IIA: Integration Theory), a 6-week course, for students who place out of Math 121 and are unsure if they want to complete a full semester of calculus. Math 121 is not open to students who have received a score of 4 or 5 on either AP Calculus exam.

**If you are interested in statistics**, please use the following guide to select a course:

- **Students who received a score of 4 or 5 on the AP Statistics exam** should preregister for Math 242 (Applied Statistical Modeling).
- **Students who received a score of 3 or lower on the AP Statistics exam** should preregister for Math 141 (Introduction to Statistical Reasoning) if they've not had any calculus, or Math 240 if they've had calculus.
- **Students interested in statistics who have not had any exposure to statistics** should preregister for Math 141 if they've not had any calculus, or Math 240 if they've had calculus.

Math 141 and Math 240 are not open to students who have received a score of 4 or 5 on the AP Statistics exam. Math 121/125 or the equivalent is required to enroll in Math 240. A score of 4 or 5 on the AP Statistics exam together with Math 242 counts as satisfying the statistics gateway requirement.



Math 240 is the proper choice (instead of Math 141) for students interested in studies of statistics at the 300-level. In the case of no calculus background, the student should first take calculus courses before an introductory statistics course.

Any student without AP credit in Calculus can still receive 1 unit of advanced placement credit by performing well on a written Calculus Credit Examination given by the department in early September. Please consult with the department if you are interested in taking the Calculus Credit Examination. The first part of the examination covers limits, differentiation and its applications, graphs, the definite integral and area, and polar coordinates. The second part covers exponential, logarithmic, and trigonometric functions and their inverses; techniques of integration; volume and arc length; indeterminate forms; and simple differential equations.

There is no universal math or statistics requirement for medical school. Many schools, however, have their own calculus and/or statistics requirements. A full unit of calculus (Math 121, Math 125, Math 126/127, or Math 220) satisfies the pre-medical recommended/required unit in calculus. A unit of statistics (Math 141, 240, or 242) satisfies the pre-medical statistics recommendation/requirement. Students interested in health professions other than medical school should also take statistics. Please consult with the department and/or the pre-health advisor in the Center for Career Education for more information.

Students majoring in mathematics/statistics have a choice of three “pathways” through the major: core mathematics, applied mathematics, and statistics. No matter which pathway they choose, it is important that students considering a major complete Math 121/125 (or the equivalent) by the end of the first year and Math 220 and 221 by the end of the sophomore year. The department encourages its majors to design well-balanced programs with representative courses from the arts, foreign languages, natural and physical sciences, and social sciences.

For more information, please visit the [Mathematics & Statistics Department](#) website.

## Media Studies Program

The Media Studies Program offers students a multidisciplinary approach to the study of media culture. The Program’s curriculum provides students with the intellectual and creative tools to become sophisticated analysts of both contemporary and historical media environments, developing theoretical and critical skills that can be used in everyday experiences of media consumption and production. Participating faculty are drawn from disciplines such as Anthropology, Art, Asian Studies, Computer Science, Education, English, Film, French and Francophone Studies, Latin American and Latinx Studies, Music, Psychological Science, and Sociology.

The Program’s curriculum includes considerations of the form and aesthetics of media objects, the history of old and new media technologies, the economic and organizational structure of media industries, indigenous and oppositional media forms, psychological engagement with and

impact of media consumption, representations of social identity (e.g., gender, ethnicity, sexuality) in media, and considerations of diversity and equity in media production, content, and reception. The Program includes a set of core courses that provide students with a strong base in media theory and analysis, beginning with a multidisciplinary introductory-level class, Approaches to Media Studies (Media Studies 160), and culminating in a Senior Seminar and an individual Senior Project for all majors. The Media Studies major also provides each student with the opportunity to design their course of studies to their specific interests. Media Studies majors work with a Faculty Advisor and the Program Director to design a coherent plan of study from different Departments and Programs. Students are also encouraged to link their theoretical and critical study of media with hands-on practice-based courses and/or internships in media-related workplaces.

Students with questions about the Program or its courses should email the Program Director, Dara Greenwood, at [dagreenwood@vassar.edu](mailto:dagreenwood@vassar.edu) and/or the Program's Administrative Assistant, Melissa McAlley, at [mmcalley@vassar.edu](mailto:mmcalley@vassar.edu). Declaring a MEDS major entails completing both a "focus statement" and a "planning form" (both of which can be found on our program website).

For more information, visit the [Media Studies Program](#) website.

## Medieval and Renaissance Studies

The Program in Medieval and Renaissance Studies allows students to engage in the cross-cultural study of art, history, literature, and thought from the fall of Rome to the 18th century. Students are expected to select work from three groups of disciplines: art history, music, and drama; history, political science, philosophy, religion, and anthropology; and language and literature. In addition, students are expected to gain a reading knowledge of requisite foreign languages and, in their senior year, write an interdisciplinary essay under the supervision of one or more of the participating faculty.

First-year students interested in Medieval and Renaissance Studies should consult with the director soon after arriving on campus. First-year students considering majoring in the program should elect some of the introductory courses in Greek and Roman studies, philosophy, religion, political science, and history during their first year at the college. Students should select introductory courses in the two disciplines that they hope to study at the higher level. Art 105-106 provides a grounding for the program, as do the historical sections of English 101. The Dark Ages (History 116) and High Middle Ages (History 117) are valuable introductions to medieval history, and the College Course 101 (Civilization in Question) offers a useful multidisciplinary and team-taught approach to pre-modern readings. Students should think carefully about the language that they plan to take in the program. Latin is highly recommended for students planning to enter graduate school in medieval studies. Since many majors study abroad, it is wise to begin or continue a language appropriate to the country in which students anticipate studying.

For more information, please visit the [Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program](#) website.

## Music

Music is studied at Vassar in each of its distinct but interrelated aspects: theory, history, composition, and performance. First-year students may choose from among Fundamentals of Music (MUSI-101), Music Theory I (MUSI-105), Introduction to World Music (MUSI-136), a First-Year Writing Seminar, and private lessons including piano, jazz piano, organ, harpsichord, voice, violin, viola, cello, double bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, saxophone, French horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, percussion, classical guitar, jazz guitar, and harp. All private lessons are Intensive courses. Please note that there is an additional performance fee for private lessons; however, the fee is waived for students who take lessons for credit and are on Vassar Financial Aid. For more information, visit the lessons section on the Music department's webpage.

**Ensembles.** Students interested in performing in an ensemble may audition for the Vassar College Choir, Chamber Singers, Treble Chorus, Jazz Combos, Jazz Ensemble, Orchestra, Chamber Music, and Wind Ensemble. Please note that Jazz Combos and Chamber Music are Intensive courses.

**Music Major.** For students planning to major in music or to pursue a music correlate, Music Theory I and II (MUSI-105/106) should be taken in the first year if possible, as these courses are prerequisites to all subsequent courses in the major and most of the correlates. Music 105/106 is a study of music theory and aural skills, and requires prior familiarity with the rudiments of music.

**Correlate Sequences.** Students may elect to pursue a correlate sequence in Music and Culture, Composition, History, Theory, or Performance. Descriptions of the correlates and their requirements may be found on the Music Department website and in the College Course Catalog.

**Intensives.** The Music Department is pleased to offer an array of Intensive courses: all private lessons, chamber music, and jazz combos are designated as Intensives. We also offer non-performance Intensives, such as *Vassar Music Treasures*.

**Non-Majors.** Music 101 is a study of musical fundamentals and requires no previous musical training. Music 136 focuses on various topics in music of non-Western cultures; neither may be counted toward the major but can be applied to the music correlate.

**Music Theory Placement.** A simple, 2-minute online placement exam is required for all students to determine the best music theory course to take (MUSI-101 or MUSI-105). This exam ascertains that you can fluently read notes on both bass and treble clefs, which is the prerequisite for MUSI-105. If you cannot comfortably read both clefs, MUSI 101 is the appropriate course to start with. The exam (and instructions) are located [here](#). Please contact Tahirih Motazedian ([tmotazedian@vassar.edu](mailto:tmotazedian@vassar.edu)) if you have any questions.

**Advanced Placement.** The Music Department offers its own advanced placement music theory exam during Orientation Week for those students who have an exceptionally strong background in music theory. This exam determines whether students qualify to skip MUSI-105 and go straight

into MUSI-106. This exam expects outstanding proficiency in four-part writing and voice-leading, harmonic (roman numeral) analysis, and figured-bass realization. Thoroughly review your skills beforehand because the exam may be taken only once. Contact Tahirih Motazedian ([tmotazedian@vassar.edu](mailto:tmotazedian@vassar.edu)) with any questions.

**Auditions for Lessons and Ensembles.** An audition is required for all voice and most instrumental lessons. Full information about auditions will be circulated and posted on the Music Department website this summer.

**Co-requisite Requirements.** The Music Department believes that music performance in a liberal arts environment should be studied in the context of knowledge of music history and theory. Therefore, students taking lessons for credit are required to take at least one music course no later than the third semester of study and, if continuing with lessons for credit, must complete 1.5 credits by their junior year. First-year students and first-semester sophomores are especially encouraged to take at least one of the following: MUSI-101, 105, 136, or 202.

For more information, please visit the [Music Department](#) website.

## Neuroscience and Behavior

Neuroscience and Behavior is a multidisciplinary program for students who are interested in how interactions of the nervous system (including the brain), body, and environment contribute to animal behavior. Faculty and students in Neuroscience and Behavior study these interactions in a wide range of taxa, at many different organizational levels, and in both the lab and the field. Our classes and research are informed by both psychological science and biology. Majors investigate the structure and function of sensory systems and the nervous system (including the brain), the development and evolution of neural and behavioral systems, and the co-actions and interactions among behavior, the environment, physiology, and heredity. The study of neuroscience and behavior requires students to delve deeply into understanding nervous system mechanisms at all levels of analysis (e.g., molecules, individual neurons, synapses, circuits, pathways, and nervous and sensory systems). Students must also develop a deep understanding of behavior from both a psychological and ethological perspective. This program is ideal for students with interests in biological and psychological science specifically, but also students interested in incorporating anthropology, chemistry, computer science, physics and astronomy, mathematics and statistics, and philosophy into the study of neuroscience and behavior.

Interested first-year students should take Biology 107, which is required for Neuroscience and Behavior majors, as well as a number of other majors. After completion of Biology 107 (or the equivalent), students are encouraged to take Biology 108 and Neuroscience and Behavior 105, which are also required for the major. Courses that can be taken during the first year which are recommended, but not required for the major include, but are not limited to, Psychological Science 105, Cognitive Science 100, and Chemistry 125.

For more information about the courses, the faculty, and what to do with a degree in neuroscience and behavior after graduation, please visit the [Neuroscience & Behavior Program](#) website.

If you have questions that are not answered when you visit the website, please email [neuroscienceandbehavior@vassar.edu](mailto:neuroscienceandbehavior@vassar.edu) or the current Neuroscience and Behavior Director.

## Philosophy

Philosophy is the search to understand ourselves and the world by reflecting critically on the beliefs and values that shape our lives. What is the relationship between mind and body? Are there limits to what we can know? Are there objective moral truths? Are our own political and economic institutions just? Is there such a thing as beauty, and does it matter in art? At Vassar, we approach these and other questions from a variety of perspectives and traditions: ancient and modern; eastern and western; analytic and continental. We aim to help students at all levels learn to think, speak, and write with open-mindedness, clarity, and rigor.

First-year students may begin the study of philosophy with any of our 100-level courses. This selection allows students to align their first philosophy course with their interests or plans for future study.

Philosophy 101, 102, and 103 all study the history of Western philosophy through the great texts of this tradition. Philosophy 101 covers ancient Greek thought, with emphasis on Plato and Aristotle. Philosophy 102 surveys modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant. Philosophy 103 covers philosophy in medieval Europe and the Islamic world. All three courses provide an excellent background for understanding later debates in Western philosophy and provide conceptual tools to work in a variety of fields. These courses may be taken in any order.

Philosophy 110 is an introduction to ancient Chinese philosophy, roughly from 500 to 221 BCE, with a special focus on early Confucianism and Taoism. Topics discussed include human nature, methods of ethical education and self-cultivation, virtues and vices, along with the role of conventions and institutions of human life. This course assumes no background knowledge of philosophy, Chinese culture, or language.

Philosophical Questions (Philosophy 105) and Philosophy and Contemporary Issues (Philosophy 106) provide an alternative approach to the subject. These courses are organized around philosophical problems rather than authors or periods. Philosophy 105 explores some traditional questions concerning the relation between mind and body, the nature of truth, the scope and limits of human knowledge, and the basis of ethics. Philosophy 106 investigates philosophical issues arising out of contemporary political and moral dilemmas. Both courses aim to help students develop their critical powers and philosophical views.

Logic (Philosophy 125) provides an introduction to philosophy focused on the formal structure and evaluation of arguments. Students develop an understanding of notions of truth, proof, and

validity, and the course explores the importance of these concepts for debates within philosophy, as well as their relevance for disciplines such as computer science, mathematics, and linguistics.

For more information, please visit the [Philosophy Department](#) website.

## Physical Education

The instructional program in the Physical Education Department offers 0.5 units of academic credit for courses in the following physical activities: badminton, fencing, fundamentals of conditioning, golf, squash, swimming, tennis, and weight training. Two courses, Introduction to Athletic Injury Care (Physical Education 110) and Nutrition and Exercise (Physical Education 210), are offered for one unit of academic credit. Students may also earn 0.5 unit for participation on a varsity athletics team, PHED 320, with prior approval from the coach.

No more than four 0.5 units of physical education credit may count toward the degree. One-unit courses are exempted from this limitation.

Beginning classes assume no prior experience. Those who think they qualify for an intermediate or advanced section should register for it. However, they should be prepared to drop it after the first class if the instructor thinks they are not ready for that level of work.

For more information, visit the [Physical Education curriculum](#) website or please contact the Associate Director of Athletics for Physical Education, Bruce Gillman, at 845-437-7454.

## Physics and Astronomy

### Astronomy

The astronomy major accommodates students interested in careers in professional astronomy as well as those who wish to combine a strong background in astronomy with specialization in another field. Except at the introductory level, astronomy courses have small enrollments (5 to 10 is typical) and students have good access to faculty as well as instrumentation. Recent graduates have gone on to graduate astronomy programs at Caltech, UCLA, University of Maryland, Columbia, Boston University, New Mexico State University, University of Colorado, NC State, and University of California. Other recent astronomy graduates are pursuing careers in such diverse fields as aerospace engineering, secondary education, media consulting, journalism, computing, finance, medicine, and music.

Those interested in astronomy should consider enrolling in Astronomy 101 in the fall semester or 105 in the spring semester. These introductory courses survey many areas of modern astronomy and presume little mathematical or scientific background. They also satisfy the quantitative analysis requirement. First-year students with an interest in majoring in astronomy should consult with the department at their earliest convenience and consider electing physics and calculus in



their first semester. Such students may contact Professors Colette Salyk ([cosalyk@vassar.edu](mailto:cosalyk@vassar.edu)) or Ed Buie II ([ebuie@vassar.edu](mailto:ebuie@vassar.edu)) over the summer, even prior to course selection.

The Class of 1951 Observatory houses a 32-inch telescope and a 20-inch telescope, computer-controlled and equipped with an electronic camera. Various small telescopes, including a solar telescope, are also at the site. We support a program of searching for extrasolar planets by student observers at the observatory. Research is also done during the academic year and during the summer (through the URSI program) using data from the James Webb Space Telescope, the Hubble Space Telescope, and other national observatories or using simulations on supercomputers. Recent student-faculty research projects have included work on the structure of galaxies, protoplanetary disks, and exoplanet searches. Students also host open nights at the observatory as outreach for the public.

Because astronomy is a relatively small field, the department at Vassar finds it important to maintain strong ties with other schools and programs. We have a strong tradition of student participation at astronomy meetings off-campus. Vassar participates in the Astronomical Society of New York, and in the Keck Northeast Astronomy Consortium of eight liberal arts institutions, a group that exchanges summer research students, hosts an annual student symposium, and collaborates on research projects.

America's first woman astronomer, Maria Mitchell, was also the first director of the original Vassar College Observatory, now a historical landmark on campus. She believed astronomical education is best accomplished when students do their own research and that students work best when they are part of a supportive scientific community. The department today works to maintain Maria Mitchell's legacy. All astronomy majors complete an Intensive research experience with a Vassar professor, individually or in groups.

## Physics

The curriculum of the physics major is designed to satisfy the needs of students with various goals, from pursuing a career in physics to pursuing technical and non-technical careers in other disciplines. A rigorous course selection is available for those interested in physics, astronomy, or engineering (students may apply for a dual degree with the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth) as well as for pre-medical students, other science majors, or students electing a correlate sequence in physics. Courses are also available for those students with an interest in learning about the ideas of physics with a less quantitative approach. Students interested in biophysics should consult with Professor Magnes ([jemagnes@vassar.edu](mailto:jemagnes@vassar.edu)), and students interested in physics education should consult with Professor Schwarz ([schwarz@vassar.edu](mailto:schwarz@vassar.edu)) for advice on appropriate courses.

First-year students who are interested in majoring in physics should elect PHYS-113/114 in their first year (or other physics courses, as determined by advanced placement), as well as the appropriate mathematics courses. First-year students who have not taken calculus are encouraged to enroll in calculus concurrently with physics. PHYS-113/114 are appropriate both for potential physics majors as well as those planning possible majors in other sciences and for

pre-medical students. We also offer the PHYS-111/112 algebra-based introductory physics courses intended for pre-medical students unless they already have AP credit in the corresponding course; in that case, they should consult with the department regarding placement (see note below). Students interested in majoring in physics who have not yet taken a calculus course are also encouraged to enroll in PHYS-111. Although it is possible to complete the requirements for the physics major by starting in the sophomore year, it is extremely difficult if physics and mathematics are not elected in the first year. Interested students are strongly encouraged to work closely with a department advisor in planning for a physics major.

Students who receive a score of 4 or 5 on the Physics 1 exam will receive one unit of AP credit. Students taking the Physics C Mechanics exam or Physics C Electricity and Magnetism exam will receive 1 unit of credit each for a score of 4 or 5. Students who have taken Advanced Placement Physics of any level, IB, A-levels, or another advanced high school physics course should take our placement exam to be considered for placement into second (PHYS-114) or third semester (PHYS-200) Physics. The placement exam is only offered before the start of the fall semester; the exact time and location will be listed in the orientation schedule. Additional placement issues should be addressed by consulting with the department during departmental drop-in advising during orientation. Students who have any questions over the summer about placement may contact Professor Jenny Magnes ([jemagnes@vassar.edu](mailto:jemagnes@vassar.edu)) before selecting courses.

Special note to pre-medical students: The department recommends that students seeking admission to medical school enroll in Physics 111/112 unless they have AP Physics credit; in that case, they should discuss placement with the department. Students are able to enroll in an equivalent physics course at another institution during the summer. Students who receive AP physics credit should discuss pre-med fulfillment of the laboratory requirement with the pre-health advisor in the Center for Career Education.

Students without a calculus background who are interested in majoring in Physics should enroll in Phys 111/112 and Math 121.

The department also offers courses primarily for non-science majors on a rotating basis, such as A Tour of the Subatomic Zoo (PHYS-168), Lasers, Technology, and Teleportation (PHYS-152), 20th-Century Revolutions in Physics (PHYS/STS-105), and Relatively Uncertain: A History of Physics, Religion, Good Movies, Bad Physics, and the Media (PHYS/MEDS-280), and Pop Culture (PHYS/Religion/STS-160).

There are opportunities in the department for research collaboration and thesis work with faculty in fields including physics education, ultrafast laser physics, atomic physics, particle physics, molecular physics, optical physics, photonics, plasmonics, topological mechanics, and biophysics. All physics majors complete an Intensive research experience. Summer research with faculty is available through Vassar's Undergraduate Research Summer Institute (URSI).

For more information, please visit the [Physics and Astronomy](#) Department website.



## Political Science

Politics, the pursuit and exercise of power, exists in many realms of social life—not just in government but in businesses, religious institutions, universities, clubs, the media, and families. The academic discipline of political science focuses mainly on the politics of states (governments), including their political relations with members of society and with one another. It examines the sources, distribution, and exercise of power; the roles of class, race, and gender; the dynamics and impact of social movements; the political attitudes and behaviors of individuals and groups; the functioning of domestic and international political institutions; the relations among states, nations, and other actors in the international system; political beliefs, values, and ideologies; mass media and communications; the place of legal systems in domestic and international politics; major issues of public policy such as affirmative action, reproductive rights, and access to health care; human rights, immigration, welfare reform, and governmental budgets; and major global issues such as war, the economy, and the environment.

Four one-semester courses corresponding to the major fields of political science are offered at the introductory level: American Politics (Political Science 140), Comparative Politics (Political Science 150, political systems outside the U.S.), International Politics (Political Science 160, the relations among nations), and Political Theory (Political Science 170, political philosophy). First-year students planning to major in political science would normally elect one introductory course. This fulfills the introductory level requirement for concentration in political science. Students are allowed to count up to two units in different subfields at the 100-level in political science toward the major. No high school credits, Advanced Placement, or IB scores, however, may be counted toward the major.

A concentration or major in political science not only serves the purposes of a liberal arts education but is especially relevant to careers in law, business, finance, governmental service at all levels, non-governmental organizations, teaching, and political journalism. Opportunities exist for internships, community-engaged learning, and study abroad programs off campus and research assistantships in the department.

For more information, please visit the [Political Science Department](#) website.

## Psychological Science

The Psychological Science Department has one introductory course, Psychological Science 105, which introduces students to fundamental psychological processes and contemporary research methods in Psychological Science. Psychological Science 105 may be taught either as a traditional survey or as a special topics course. Both offer the same basic content. However, a special topics version of the course views the research areas of psychological science through a topical lens. The department also offers a First-Year Writing Seminar, Psychology 108: Reading and Writing in Psychology. The topics of these seminars vary depending on the faculty member leading the course.

Students may receive Psychological Science 105 credit through successful completion of the course or through appropriate transfer credit. Any of the following that appear on the Vassar College transcript as college credits will count as equivalent to Psychological Science 105: AP Psychology (score of 4 or 5 on the AP exam), IB Psychology (score of 5, 6, or 7 on the IB exam), or successful completion of a pre-matriculation course in introductory psychology from a college or university. Students wishing to count their AP or IB score as equivalent to Psychological Science 105 should have those scores listed on their Vassar transcripts. Students with a pre-matriculation college course should submit the syllabus and description of the text used in the course, as well as an official transcript to the department chair for approval. A high school course in psychology does not, by itself, qualify a student for advanced course placement. An AP examination in statistics does not meet the requirement for the statistics course in psychology. For pre-matriculation credit in psychological statistics, a college-level course must have been taken, and the syllabus, description of the course, and official transcript must be submitted to and approved by the department chair.

A wide range of intermediate-level course offerings is available covering the major sub-areas of the diverse field of psychological science. These include clinical, developmental, evolutionary/comparative, health, individual differences, learning and behavior, physiological, and social psychology.

Students who wish to major in Psychological Science or pursue advanced coursework in Psychological Science should examine the Psychological Science Major's Handbook, linked on the department website, and/or consult with members of the department.

For more information, please visit the [Psychological Science](#) website or contact the Department Chair, Professor Cleaveland (845-437-7646 or [macleaveland@vassar.edu](mailto:macleaveland@vassar.edu)).

## Religion

In the Religion Department we examine in rigorous ways the most profound issues that human beings face, issues such as building community, understanding suffering and pain, searching for the ethical life, or finding a sense of faith or meaning. The academic study of religion is an interdisciplinary exploration of these issues as well as of other phenomena we call "religious" around the world. Faculty in our department use historical methods to understand how religious communities and practices change over time; they use comparative methods to analyze ritual, popular culture, race, gender, media and material culture in different settings; and they employ sociological, psychological, and anthropological methods to study how religiosity shapes social and individual life. Our classes critically explore the complexities of religion around the globe, looking at how religion plays a key role in today's urgent political and social problems. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of our department, we particularly welcome double majors and students working in related fields.

For more information, please visit the [Religion Department](#) website.

## Russian Studies

In 1907, Vassar College became the first among the original Seven Sisters colleges to offer a course on Russian history. In 1939, again first among its peers, Vassar instituted regular courses in Russian. At present, the Department of Russian Studies offers a well-rounded curriculum that includes three years of language instruction and a wide range of literature and culture courses taught both in Russian and in English.

First-year students with no previous knowledge of the Russian language may elect Elementary Russian (Russian 105-106) or the one-semester Intensive Russian (Russian 107) course that covers the same amount of material in a more concentrated fashion. The department gives an oral and written examination to students with previous knowledge of Russian for the purpose of satisfying the foreign language proficiency requirement, for placement into intermediate or advanced courses, and for a possible 2 units of credit. Please be sure to attend the departmental drop-in advising session during the orientation period for more information.

All Russian Studies courses offered in translation are open to first-year students. The topics of such courses include literature, both classical and modern, theater, cinema, visual arts, and various aspects of Russian culture.

Students who are considering the option of majoring in Russian are urged to begin the study of the language in their first year, continuing with intermediate and advanced language courses in their sophomore and junior years. For those who will be starting their language study here this sequence is mandatory unless one of these levels is covered in an accredited summer program. Students with prior knowledge of Russian continue at the level determined by the placement test. Every semester the department offers a specialized seminar, given entirely in Russian, on a literary or cultural topic. Additionally, some courses taught in English have a supplementary section with readings in Russian.

Every fall, in partnership with the Hermitage Museum, the department conducts a semester-long junior year abroad program in St. Petersburg that gives our students unique access to the cultural treasures of Russia's imperial capital. Currently, the program is on hold, but we offer on a yearly basis a course on masterpieces of the Hermitage taught from St. Petersburg live by the Museum's curators.

Students can benefit from participation in the weekly Russian tea, from conversations with the native speaker who serves as the departmental language fellow, or from participation in our department band ("Listopad") and from many other extracurricular activities.

For more information, visit the [Department of Russian Studies](#) website.

## Science, Technology, and Society

The Science, Technology, and Society (STS) Program is a multidisciplinary program that studies science and technology in a social, cultural, and historical context. Established in 1971, it was one of the first programs of its kind at an undergraduate institution. By taking a broad range of courses across the curriculum and within the program itself, the STS major learns how the interrelationships among science, technology, and society have developed, and what major figures in the sciences and humanities have thought about it. The STS program is designed to enable students to pursue three objectives: a) to understand the central role of science and technology in contemporary society; b) to examine how science and technology reflect their social, political, philosophical, economic, and cultural contexts; and c) to explore the human, ethical, and policy implications of current and emerging technologies.

Faculty who teach in the STS program are drawn from many departments in the college. Presently, this includes faculty from biology, chemistry, cognitive science, economics, history, music, philosophy, physics, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology. Majors take courses in STS and in other departments and programs and culminate in a senior thesis. Recent senior theses have addressed such topics as: “The Human Genome Patent Debate,” “The Controversy over the Use of Transgenic Organisms in Agriculture,” “Paradigms in Conflict: Technological Development in Rural India,” and “Wireless Communication and the 21st-Century Employee.” Strengths of the program are the flexibility it gives its majors and the close relationship it fosters between students and faculty.

First-year students who are interested in STS should consider taking a natural science, including a laboratory course, Introductory Sociology (Sociology 151) and/or Introduction to Economics (Economics 102). All 100-level STS courses are open to first-year students. STS 200 (Conceptualizing STS: Theory and Practice) is typically taken by sophomores and juniors but a few spots may be available to well-prepared first-year students.

For more information, please visit the [STS Program](#) website, or contact the Director at [sts@vassar.edu](mailto:sts@vassar.edu).

## Self-Instructional Language Program (Silp)

The Self-Instructional Language Program allows well-motivated students to enroll in a program of supervised self-instruction in Intermediate American Sign Language, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Irish/Gaelic, Portuguese, Swahili, Swedish, Turkish, and Yiddish. Students develop an active command of the target language with the help of textbooks, multimedia materials, and weekly review sessions with a native-speaking tutor. The program also offers a course in Beginning American Sign Language; please note that this class is not open to first-year students.

An orientation meeting for all students interested in a SILP course will be held on the first Wednesday afternoon of the semester; please check for announcements in Chicago Hall 131.

For more information, visit the [Self-Instructional Language Program](#) or contact the director, Silke von der Emde ([vonderemde@vassar.edu](mailto:vonderemde@vassar.edu)).

## Sociology

The study of sociology enables students to explore their familiar social environment anew from sociological perspectives and thereby broaden their minds and deepen their understanding of the “social structures” that shape the distribution of economic, political, and cultural power among social groups. The Sociology Department at Vassar offers a wide range of courses designed to nurture “sociological imagination,” critical awareness of social inequalities, and passion for social justice. Topics of our courses include consumerism and capitalism, development and social change, education and schooling, environmental justice and climate change, food, gender/sexuality, globalization, health and illness, law/crime/prison, mass media and popular culture, public policy, race/ethnicity, social class, urban issues, and work within organizational-international contexts. Students who majored in sociology at Vassar have pursued careers in government, research, business, the media, social work, and a variety of nonprofit organizations. Others have gone on to pursue graduate study in law, health care, and sociology as well as in other academic or professional disciplines.

Our Introductory Sociology (Sociology 151) course explores major concepts and various approaches necessary for cultivating a sociological imagination; the theme of each section varies, although Sociology 151 may not be repeated for credit. First-year students are also invited to enroll in our First-Year Writing Seminars, which also vary thematically. These seminars can count toward the major but do not ordinarily satisfy the Introductory Sociology requirement.

Our 200-level courses in the department deal with an array of contemporary topics as well as with modern social theory and methods of sociological analysis. 300-level courses provide students with the chance to examine selected sociological topics in seminar settings. In addition, the department offers independent study or community-engaged learning opportunities under the sponsorship of individual faculty members. In the senior year, students may undertake individual work by choosing to write a senior thesis, which offers the opportunity to plan and execute an original sociological investigation on a topic of their choosing. Sociology requires 10.5 units for a major and also offers a correlate sequence that allows students to combine a sequence of six sociology courses with a major in another discipline.

Our faculty are pleased to advise first-year students, whether or not they are considering a sociology major. Students with questions about the department can email [sociology@vassar.edu](mailto:sociology@vassar.edu). Please explore the [Sociology Department website](#) for more information about our faculty, course offerings, and other resources.

## Spanish

(see Hispanic Studies)

## Urban Studies

As most of the world's population now resides in cities, suburbs, and metropolitan areas, virtually nowhere on Earth is outside of urban influences. The Urban Studies Program provides multidisciplinary perspectives on the forms and cultures of cities, planetary urbanization, urban ways of life, design and architecture, and urban planning and policy. We encourage students to articulate and pursue their own intellectual goals within the major, or to develop a correlate sequence on urban issues to complement other majors. Our many graduates have gone on to careers in urban planning, policy analysis, government service, public administration, urban design and architecture, human services, teaching, business, and many other fields.

First-year students should take "Introduction to Urban Studies" (Urban Studies 100), which examines different ways of understanding and intervening in urban space. Subsequently, those considering majors should enroll in "Urban Theory" (Urban Studies 200) to study important theoretical debates and to formulate original questions for investigation. Students may also take such intermediate courses as "Making Cities" (Urban Studies 230); "Community Development" (Urban Studies 237); "Urban Geography: Space, Place, and Environment" (Urban Studies 250); "Cities of the Global South" (Urban Studies 252); "Gender and Social Space" (Urban Studies 270); and other urban studies courses.

The majors take a capstone senior seminar (Urban Studies 303) and a selection of other advanced courses. Prior seminars for juniors and seniors have focused on such topics as "Greening the City," "Plotting the Invisible City," "Memory and the City," "Musical Urbanism," "Preserving Whose City?" and "Urban Technopolitics." In addition, majors gain practical as well as theoretical expertise in urban studies through Community-Engaged Learning (Urban Studies 290). During their senior year, majors can choose to complete an optional year-long senior thesis or senior project. Entering students with previous courses in urban studies may confer with the program director for advice on advanced placement, although there is no standard AP test.

For more information, please visit the [Urban Studies Program](#) website or email the program director, Brian Godfrey ([godfrey@vassar.edu](mailto:godfrey@vassar.edu)) or the program's administrative assistant, Deserie Rivera ([drivera@vassar.edu](mailto:drivera@vassar.edu)).

## Women, Feminist, and Queer Studies

Women, Feminist, and Queer Studies (WFQS) is a transdisciplinary program that explores gender and sexuality through feminist and queer methodologies. Using an intersectional framework, students explore gender and sexuality through multiple axes of power, including race, class, ethnicity, disability, and more. We offer a curriculum in which students study the way that gender and sexuality help organize the world (and in turn are organized by culture and society), but also how they constitute a methodological prism through which to transform it.

Through a variety of feminist analytics including transnational feminism, Black feminist thought, decolonial feminism, indigenous feminism, queer studies, and transgender epistemologies, WFQS



interrogates the interconnectedness of global forces and local realities. We draw on activist efforts for knowledge-building toward a just society and political coalitions (not just individual solutions), and transformative pedagogical practices for undergraduate students.

We engage these frameworks to analyze human experience in its bodily, political, economic, and cultural dimensions. Students learn to use a complex variety of theoretical and empirical research as well as anti-racist queer and feminist praxis to produce critical knowledges that envision possibilities for transformation and change.

First-year students interested in the major are encouraged to take WFQS-130, offered each semester, which serves as a foundation for future study. Beyond the introductory level, regularly offered courses include Introduction to Queer Studies (WFQS-201), also open to first-year students, Topics in Gender, Culture, Media (WFQS-267), Topics in the Construction of Gender (WFQS-241), Making Waves: Topics in Feminist Activism (WFQS-245), Feminist Theory (WFQS-250), and Global Feminism (WFQS-251), as well as various senior seminars. A full list of courses can be found in the Vassar Catalog.

In addition, the WFQS Program offers correlates in both Women's Studies and Queer Studies. For more information, please visit the [WFQS Program](#) website or contact the director, Paulina Bren ([pabren@vassar.edu](mailto:pabren@vassar.edu)).

## OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

### The Vcard

Vassar has a one-card identification card system. First-year students receive their VCard during New Student Orientation. The VCard is your key to your residential house and serves as your library card, Meal Plan card, VCash account, and your VPrint and VWash account. Each student will also get \$110 in Arlington Bucks each semester. The Arlington Bucks account is separate from your Meal Plan and VCash account on your VCard, and is made available for use at our "off-campus merchants." When visiting any participating off-campus merchant, these funds will automatically be used first when purchasing with your VCard. Once the \$110 in Arlington Bucks is depleted, any off-campus merchant purchases will default to the funds in your VCash account. For more information or a list of the participating businesses off-campus, please visit the [Card Office](#) website.

The VCard also carries your meal plan account; a meal plan is required for every student. Specifics about the meal plan can be found at the [dining](#) website.

VCash is a prepaid account available on your VCard. Uses are: laundry machines in the residence houses, copiers and printers across campus (when your VPrint and VWash quota runs out), vending machines, Computer Store purchases, Vassar College Store, eateries on campus, and participating local off-campus businesses.

VCash can be deposited either online at [card.vassar.edu](http://card.vassar.edu) using Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and Discover or by going to the Service Desk (located in the College Center) during the first month of every semester and charging VCash home to your student bill.

The VCard carries a VPrint and VWash account, credited once per semester with a minimum of \$30.00 at no charge to you. Additional amounts depend on your financial aid status. If you exceed this limit, the system will automatically start deducting from your VCash account for printing and laundry.

## Banks

As you plan for your life in Poughkeepsie, you may be interested in a list of local banks. The college is not able to cash checks, but we do have an automated teller in the College Center, put in place by Chase Bank. Banks within one mile of Vassar are listed below:

Bank of America  
11 Raymond Avenue  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603  
845-452-2041

Key Bank  
55 Burnett Boulevard  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603  
845-471-6010

TD Bank  
703 Main Street  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601  
845-431-6101

Ulster Savings Bank 39 Burnett Boulevard  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603  
845-454-7144

NOTE: Vassar College has no prior arrangements with any of the businesses listed above. These resources are listed here as a courtesy to students and families.



## Mailroom Hours and Services

The Mailroom is located in the College Center, North Atrium. Hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00am-4:30 pm. No retail postage sales available; personal outgoing letters or packages without postage affixed will not be accepted. The Arlington Post Office is located at 41 Raymond Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY.

Additionally, if anyone has any specific needs they can always email [receiving@vassar.edu](mailto:receiving@vassar.edu) and/or [mailroom@vassar.edu](mailto:mailroom@vassar.edu) and we will try to accommodate that request as soon as possible.

## Medication

If you need medication delivered to the College please use either UPS, FedEx or DHL. Please use the address format shown below.

## Shipping and Receiving

Mail and/or packages are delivered daily by the USPS, FedEx, UPS, and DHL. While your carrier may have sent you an email stating your package has been delivered to Vassar, Mail Services and the Central Receiving Department need time to sort and process those packages for delivery to you. Package processing time may vary depending on incoming volume. However, we make every effort to have all packages processed and available for pick-up within 24 hours of receipt.

Please wait until you receive a pick-up confirmation email from the Mail Room (USPS) or Receiving (FedEx, UPS, and DHL) before coming to the Mailroom or the Receiving Department. When you give out your mailing address, please use the following format:

### Recipient's Name

Box #####

Vassar College

124 Raymond Avenue Poughkeepsie, NY 12604-####

(##### is the same as your box number)

Receiving hours are 8:00 am–12:00 pm, and 12:30–4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. The Receiving Department does not supply transportation from their offices to your residence house, so please plan how much to put in each box. **You may begin shipping at the end of July.**

Please use only the name that will appear on your student ID. Perishable packages will be held for one week before disposal. Packages left at the end of the spring semester will be subject to disposal. Please contact Receiving at 845-437-5693 or email [receiving@vassar.edu](mailto:receiving@vassar.edu) with questions. Or visit the [Central Receiving](#) website.

## International Packages Customs Form

To ship a package internationally, please visit [this link](#). Here, you will need to register (by creating a username and password). Download the form and attach it to your international package.

## Transportation and Automobile Regulations

The Campus Safety Office is available to provide support and safety services to the campus community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Safety Officers patrol campus and staff the Campus Response Center (CRC), a dispatch center located just inside the front entrance of Main Building. Call (845) 437-7333 any time of the day or night for emergency assistance or (845) 437-5221 for non-emergency matters. **Emergency Blue Light phones** are located throughout campus and can be used for contacting Campus Safety.

**Call the CRC** if you are in need of the Vassar Health Service EMT, an ambulance, the fire department, the Residential Living and Wellness Administrator on Call, the after-hours Counselor on Call services, or other emergency services.

Safety Officers also operate a Campus Safety Shuttle during the evening hours. The shuttle circles through the campus into the early morning hours. Visit Escort and Shuttle Services to see the shuttle stops and hours of operation.

Other routine services that are provided by the Campus Safety Office include parking/vehicle registration, bicycle registration, ticket appeals, and vehicle requests for activities sponsored by the College that are within a 90-mile radius of campus. Forms for these services can be found on the Campus Safety Office Forms page.

To stay informed and receive Timely Warning Notices sent out from the Campus Safety Office, confirm your cell phone is on file with the College. To update your cell phone number, students should email [registrar@vassar.edu](mailto:registrar@vassar.edu).

Special note:

The Vassar College Transportation Department provides shuttle transportation to the Boston area and Kennedy and LaGuardia airports at various times during the school year. During the weeks prior to the October, Thanksgiving, winter, spring, and summer breaks, the dates and times of the shuttle schedule are sent out in a campus-wide email to all students. Students wishing to utilize the transportation service must sign up per the email instructions. Student accounts are charged directly for the services they sign up for.

The Transportation Department also provides a free shuttle service to the Poughkeepsie train station at the beginning of each academic break.

First-year students are not allowed to bring vehicles to campus beginning with the 2024-2025 academic year.

All students parking on campus must be registered with the Campus Safety Office ([Campus Student Vehicle Registration](#)). There is a fee for registering a vehicle. Fees are charged to student accounts upon registration. The fee is prorated according to the percentage of financial aid received.

Campus Response Center (CRC)

Emergencies (24/7)

Call (845) 437-7333

Non-Emergency (24/7)

Call (845) 437-5221

Campus Safety Business Office

Hours

M-F 8:30 am.–4:30 pm

2500 New Hackensack Road

Across from the Farm

## **Vassar College Store Hours**

The College Store is open Mon-Fri, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm; Saturday, 11:00 am–5:00 pm; and is closed on Sunday. Please check the [College Store](#) website for updated hours and to place your order for course materials.

## Important Telephone Numbers

Emergency calls	437-7333
Campus Response Center (CRC)	437-5221
Safety	437-5200
Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (AEO)	437-7584
Admissions	437-7300
ALANA Center	437-5954
Associate Dean of the College for Residential Life & Wellness, Luis Inoa	437-5315
Campus Activities	437-5370
Campus Dining Services Director	437-5830
Care Coordination, Advocacy, Resources, and Education(CARE) Office	437-7825
Center for Career Education (CCE)	437-5285
Computing and Information Services (CIS)	437-7224
Counseling Service	437-5700
Dean of the College, Carlos Alamo	437-5601
Dean of First-Year Students, Lioba Gerhardi	437-5258
Dean of Studies, Thomas Porcello	437-5257
Financial Aid / Student Financial Services / Student Employment Office	437-5320
General Stores / Receiving	437-5693
Health Promotion and Education	437-7769
Health Services	437-5800
Office of Community-Engaged Learning (CEL)	437-5280
Office of International Services (OIS)	437-5831
Office of Student Growth and Engagement	437-5426
Libraries	437-5760
Registrar	437-5270
Religious and Spiritual Life	437-5550
Residential Life	437-5860
Vassar College Store	437-5870
V-CARD Office	437-3333
Vassar Student Association (VSA)	437-5381

## Quick Reference Web Addresses

[Accessibility and Educational Opportunity](#)

[Associate Dean of the College for Residential Life & Wellness](#)

[Ask Banner](#)

[Catalog](#)

[Center for Career Education](#)

[Computing and Information Services](#)

[Counseling Service](#)

[Dean of First-Year Students](#)

[Degree Works](#)

[Financial Services](#)

[Health Services](#)

[Learning, Teaching, and Resource Center](#)

[Registrar](#)

[Residential Life](#)