

Academic Programs: The Core Requirement

At Albion, the general education requirement is referred to as "the core." Students begin to fulfill the core in their first semester with Liberal Arts 101; some will be able to complete much of the core requirement by the end of their first year.

I. Liberal Arts 101 (First-Year Seminar; 1 unit)

II. Modes of Inquiry (1 unit in each)

Textual Analysis
 Artistic Creation and
 Analysis
 Scientific Analysis
 Modeling and Analysis
 Historical and Cultural
 Analysis

III. Category Requirements (1 unit in each)

Environmental Studies
 Ethnicity Studies
 Gender Studies
 Global Studies

Students must also complete a distribution as follows: one unit in fine arts (art and art history, music, theatre, honors), two units in humanities (English, foreign languages, philosophy, religious studies, honors), two units in mathematics or natural sciences (biology, chemistry, computer science, geological sciences, mathematics, physics, honors) and two units in social science (anthropology and sociology, economics and management, history, political science, psychology, speech communication, honors).

I. Liberal Arts 101: First-Year Seminars

The First-Year Seminars are distinguished by their small class size and close personal attention. Students select from a wide variety of seminars in which academic skills, creativity, active inquiry and collegiality are nurtured. A distinguished convocation series unites these seminars with common threads. In addition, the First-Year Seminars foster co-curricular outreach. First-Year Seminars have the following characteristics.

1. They are inquiry-based, writing-intensive, focused on developing critical thinking skills, and they emphasize discussion.
2. They are as interdisciplinary as possible, exploring multiple modes of inquiry.
3. They nurture creativity in all forms.
4. They encourage community-building and outreach as well as co-curricular experiences.

II. The Modes of Inquiry

The Modes of Inquiry core requirement reflects the awareness that there are several fundamental types of analysis that scholars use to understand the world. All Albion College courses require students to employ analytical and creative tools while completing course assignments. A Mode course, however, requires both professor and student to approach the teaching and thinking process with a significantly higher level of self-awareness and intentionality. Students are required not only to think, but also to think about their thinking.

Textual Analysis

Analyzing a text (including works of art and music, written and oral texts, and rituals and symbols) involves understanding not only what meaning that text holds but also how those meanings are produced, what purposes they serve, and what effects they have, as well as exploring the ways in which a text conveys meaning. In order to fulfill this mode of inquiry, courses must:

1. focus on the methods of analysis employed by at least one specific discipline or area of scholarship;
2. foster inquiry into the particular strengths and weaknesses of those methods;
3. require students to analyze texts in writing;
4. foster inquiry into the intellectual or cultural systems that produce the text's meaning and effects.

Artistic Creation and Analysis

Courses in this mode focus on the uniquely symbolic and expressive way in which the arts explore and express ideas and feelings. In order to fulfill this mode of inquiry, courses must:

1. require the creation or performance, and the analysis of works of art;
2. work with culturally produced rather than naturally occurring objects or experiences that have artistic, social or historical significance (for example, art objects, works of literature or various types of performances);
3. introduce appropriate forms of critical inquiry and analysis, including area-specific vocabularies, materials, techniques and/or methodologies;
4. encourage students to become critical and introspective about their cultural experiences;
5. focus on the methods and materials by which the work produces meaning as well as what meanings are to be produced, emphasizing the dialogue between form and content in the area of study.

Scientific Analysis

Courses in this mode involve the observation and interpretation of the natural world. In order to fulfill this mode of inquiry, courses must:

1. explore the subject matter and methodology of one or more of the natural sciences;
2. demonstrate how fundamental principles of these disciplines form the basis for deriving specific results;
3. require students to make observations and formulate hypotheses to explain their observations;
4. require students to test their hypotheses or other scientific theories to appreciate their strengths and weaknesses;
5. demonstrate applications to human society and the natural world;
6. include a laboratory as a significant component of the course.

Modeling and Analysis

Courses in this mode derive some essential or simplified features from logical, physical, social or biological phenomena, and describe and interpret them within an analytical framework. In order to fulfill this mode of inquiry, courses must:

1. explore logical, physical, social or biological phenomena;
2. enable students to decide which features of the phenomena to describe and what simplifying assumptions to make;
3. derive predictions from the model and interpret them in the original context;
4. consider the usefulness and the limits of the model and compare it with other possible models.

Historical and Cultural Analysis

Courses in this mode focus on how human knowledge is determined by its cultural and historical context, and how this knowledge in turn shapes cultures and creates historical change. In order to fulfill this mode of inquiry, courses must:

1. include material significantly removed from the students' experience either by virtue of cultural or historical distance;
2. direct students to investigate their own cultural and historical moment from a perspective informed by their study of culture or history;
3. require students to explore the specific cultural context of artifacts, to the extent that the course covers artifacts of a different culture or from a different historical period.

III. Category Requirements

A liberal arts education prepares students to play a critical, thoughtful role as citizens in their society. Courses in environmental, ethnicity, gender and global studies deepen students' understanding of themselves, society and the world by introducing them to many different perspectives. To this end, all students are required to take one unit each in environmental studies, ethnicity studies, gender studies and global studies as specified below.

Environmental Studies

Students are required to take one unit from the list of courses approved as satisfying the environmental studies requirement (see www.albion.edu/registrar/). Many of these courses also will satisfy a requirement in a major, in a program, or in a concentration. Each approved course meets the following criteria:

1. It must substantially enhance students' understanding of the earth's environment.
2. It must deal substantially with the consequences of human intervention into natural systems.
3. It must lead students to view the relationship among elements of environmental systems from an interdisciplinary perspective.
4. It must focus on the perspectives that environmental studies brings to the discipline.

Ethnicity Studies

Students are required to take one unit from the list of courses approved as satisfying the ethnicity studies requirement (see www.albion.edu/registrar/). Many of these courses also will satisfy a requirement in a major, in a program or in a concentration. Each

approved course meets the following criteria:

1. It must foster inquiry into the cultural construction of ethnicity.
2. It must focus on the perspectives that ethnicity brings to the discipline.
3. It must place the issues of ethnicity in their historical context. This may include the rediscovery of marginalized texts.
4. It must provide students with the opportunity to examine their own experiences with ethnicity.

Gender Studies

Students are required to take one unit from the list of courses approved as satisfying the gender studies requirement (see www.albion.edu/registrar/). Many of these courses also will satisfy a requirement in a major, in a program or in a concentration. Each approved course meets the following criteria:

1. It must foster inquiry into the cultural construction of gender.
2. It must focus on the perspectives that gender brings to the discipline.
3. It must place the issues of gender in their historical context. This may include the rediscovery of marginalized texts.

Global Studies

Students have two options in fulfilling this category. (1) They may successfully participate in any approved off-campus study program outside of the United States (or the Border Studies Program) for at least one semester and submit a journal reflecting on their experiences. Detailed journal requirements are available at the Center for International Education. International students may fulfill the global category by submitting a journal, subject to the same requirements, reflecting on their experiences at Albion. (2) They may take one unit from the list of courses approved as satisfying the global studies requirement (see www.albion.edu/registrar/). Many of these courses also will satisfy a requirement in a major, in a program or in a concentration. Each approved course meets the following criteria:

1. It must have as an organizing focus topics that are international (focusing on a particular region) or global (focusing on an issue pertaining to multiple regions or countries).
2. It must foster inquiry into the interconnectedness of international issues and students' lives.
3. It should attempt to bring the world into the classroom so that students learn how to function in an international environment and gain a deeper understanding of the world outside the United States.

[Back to Academic Programs](#)