

James Madison University Program Philosophy

General Education: *The Human Community* is the common core academic program of James Madison University in which students come to understand how distinct disciplines look at the world from different vantage points. Courses in *The Human Community* are organized into five clusters, each emphasizing unique tools, rationales, and methodologies. Taken together, courses in a student's chosen major and *The Human Community* complement and complete each other. Both are integral and essential components of a student's full and proper education.

Mission

In the Liberal Arts tradition, General Education: *The Human Community* aspires to create informed global citizens of the 21st century. We challenge our community of students and faculty to engage in personal and collective reflection, development, and action.

Structure

The Human Community credit hour requirements are as follows:

- Skills for the 21st Century, 9 credit hours (Cluster One)
- Arts and Humanities, 9 credit hours (Cluster Two)
- The Natural World, 10 credit hours (Cluster Three)
- Social and Cultural Processes, 7 credit hours (Cluster Four)
- Individuals in the HumanCommunity, 6 credit hours (Cluster Five)

The Goals of General Education

Students understand the historical and contemporary distinctions and interconnections among people, institutions, and communities that create, preserve, and transmit culture and knowledge in the arts, sciences, mathematics, social sciences, and humanities.

Students become skilled in questioning, investigating, analyzing, evaluating, and communicating.

Students participate in a variety of aesthetic and civic experiences reflecting human concerns and values that transcend the limits of specialization.

Cluster One Learning Objectives:

After completing *Cluster One: Skills for the 21st Century*, students should be able to:

- Critical Thinking
 - Evaluate claims in terms of clarity, credibility, reliability, and accuracy
 - Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyze and generate claims, arguments, and positions
 - Identify and evaluate theses and conclusions, stated and unstated assumptions, and supporting evidence and arguments.
 - Apply these skills to one's own work and the work of others.
- Communication
 - Understand and apply the fundamentals of audience analysis, message construction, development, organization, and presentation.

- Deliver effective oral presentations in a variety of contexts
- Identify, evaluate and employ critical and sensitive listening behaviors.
- Identify and manage the verbal and nonverbal dimensions of communication in a variety of contexts.
- Recognize and apply the influences of self-concept perception and culture on communication.
- Identify, evaluate and utilize the nature and functions of power and the strategies of conflict negotiation.
- Writing
 - Develop and support a relevant and informed thesis, or point of view, that is appropriate for its audience, purpose, and occasion.
 - Analyze and evaluate information to identify its argumentative, credible, and ethical elements.
 - Reflect on civic responsibility as it relates to written discourse (critical thinking, reading, and writing).
 - Demonstrate effective writing skills and processes by employing invention, research, critical analysis and evaluation, and revision for audience, purpose, and occasion.
 - Effectively incorporate and document appropriate sources to support a thesis and effectively utilize the conventions of syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- Information Literacy
 - After completing both information literacy tests and course work in critical thinking, human communication, and writing, students should be able to:
 - Determine when information is needed and find it efficiently using a variety of reference sources.
 - Evaluate the quality of the information.
 - Use the information effectively for an appropriate purpose.
 - Employ appropriate technologies to create an information-based product.
 - Use information ethically and legally.

Cluster Two Learning Objectives:

After completing Group 1. Human Questions and Contexts students will be able to:

1. Question their own and others' opinions about and responses to the world.
2. Apply the methods of the discipline(s) studied to material from the humanities.
3. Identify and evaluate arguments using appropriate concepts and techniques and to formulate logical arguments on the same basis.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of broader cultural, historical, or conceptual contexts of particular issues, ideas, objects, or events - past and present.
5. Experience appropriate humanities events (such as exhibits, films, performances or public lectures)

After completing Group 2. Visual and Performing Arts students will be able to:

1. Explain how artistic works and culture are interrelated.
2. Recognize that the arts are accessible and relevant to their lives.
3. Demonstrate disciplinary literacy (vocabulary, concepts, creative processes) in a major art form.
4. Produce an informed response to the form, content, and aesthetic qualities of artistic works.
5. Experience arts events.
6. Acknowledge relationships among the arts.

After completing Group 3. Literature students will be able to:

1. Generate increasingly nuanced questions (interpretations, ideas) about literature and explain why those questions matter.
2. Use appropriate vocabulary and tactics to analyze specific literary expressions of culture and the relationship between the reader, the author, and text.
3. Define ways that texts serve as arguments and identify rhetorical and formal elements that inform these arguments.
4. Recognize appropriate contexts (such as genres, political perspectives, textual juxtapositions) and understand that readers may interpret literature from a variety of perspectives.
5. Articulate a variety of examples of the ways in which literature gives us access to the human experience that reveals what differentiates it from, and connects it to, the other disciplines that make up the arc of human learning.

Cluster Three Learning Objectives:

After completing *Cluster Three: The Natural World*, students should be able to meet the following objectives:

- Describe the methods of inquiry that lead to mathematical truth and scientific knowledge and be able to distinguish science from pseudoscience.
- Use theories and models as unifying principles that help us understand natural phenomena and make predictions.
- Recognize the interdependence of applied research, basic research, and technology, and how they affect society.
- Illustrate the interdependence between developments in science and social and ethical issues.
- Use graphical, symbolic, and numerical methods to analyze, organize, and interpret natural phenomena.
- Discriminate between association and causation, and identify the types of evidence used to establish causation.
- Formulate hypotheses, identify relevant variables, and design experiments to test hypotheses.
- Evaluate the credibility, use, and misuse of scientific and mathematical information in scientific developments and public-policy issues.

Cluster Four Learning Objectives:

Students completing an American Experience course of Cluster Four will be able to identify, conceptualize and evaluate:

- Social and political processes and structures using quantitative and qualitative data
- Key primary sources relating to American history, political institutions and society
- The nature and development of the intellectual concepts that structure American political activity
- The history and operation of American democratic institutions
- The history and development of American society
- The history and development of American involvement in world affairs

Students completing a Global Experience course in Cluster Four will be able to identify, conceptualize and evaluate:

- Basic global problems
- Global political, social, cultural and economic systems

- The issues involved in analyzing societies different from one's own
- The global forces that shape societies
- Theoretical models used in studying global problems
- The strengths and limitations of alternative solutions to global problems across and within cultures

Cluster Five Learning Objectives:

After completing Cluster Five: Individuals in the Human Community, Wellness Domain, students should be able to:

- Understand the dimensions of wellness, the various factors affecting each dimension, and how dimensions are interrelated
- Understand the relationship between personal behaviors and lifelong health and wellness
- Assess their own levels of health and wellness and understand how these levels impact their quality of life
- Identify and implement strategies to improve their wellness

After completing Cluster Five: Individuals in the Human Community, Sociocultural Domain, students should be able to:

- Identify factors that affect individual and group behavior in social contexts
- Identify factors that lead an individual or group to adopt a particular position on social and behavioral issue
- Discern the extent to which sources of information about the socio-cultural dimension are reputable and unbiased
- Evaluate the extent to which the approach to, and uses of, psychosocial research are ethical and appropriate