

# **VASSAR COLLEGE**

## **The 2020/21 First-Year Handbook**

**A HANDBOOK FOR THE CLASS OF 2024**

# To the Class of 2024

In a few short weeks, you will join a college community of other students, faculty, and administrators eager to welcome you to Vassar. This year has been like no other year in the recent history of the College and our world. The protests happening across the country against racism and police brutality and with collective claims towards racial justice remind us how important our educational mission and work are at this moment. The COVID-19 pandemic has also challenged our nation, community, and our College. At the heart of Vassar's response to the pandemic has been the College's steadfast commitment to the safety of our students and employees with a particular emphasis on centering the most vulnerable members of our community. This Fall 2020 semester will feature a community care approach that employs multiple strategies to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 on our campus and in our local community.

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 catalogue, 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 confronting the challenges of our contemporary moment together in the creation of a collective and beloved community.

Carlos Alamo-Pastrana  
*Dean of the College and Associate Professor of Sociology*  
June 2020

NOTE - Parts of this document were created before the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, several changes will need to be made to our first-year orientation program. Additionally, all dates listed below are tentative and some office hours of operation may change. We ask for your patience as we change events in response to state, local and college guidelines. Please refer to <http://deanoffirstyearstudents.vassar.edu> and at <http://newstudents.vassar.edu> for the most up to date information.

## CONTENTS

<b>TO THE CLASS OF 2024</b> .....	2
<b>THE VASSAR FIRST YEAR</b> .....	5
General Education Student Learning Goals .....	5
New Student Orientation .....	7
How to Use This Handbook .....	7
<b>ACADEMIC, RESIDENTIAL LIFE, AND EXTRACURRICULAR RESOURCES</b> .....	8
The Dean of First-Year Students .....	8
Faculty Advisors .....	9
Libraries .....	9
The Learning, Teaching, and Research Center .....	10
Community-Engaged Learning (Formerly Field Work).....	10
Career Development .....	10
The Associate Dean of the College for Residential Life and Wellness .....	11
The Office of Residential Life .....	12
House Fellows.....	12
Student Fellows .....	12
House Advisors.....	13
House Student Advisors.....	13
House Officers .....	13
Counseling Service.....	13
Office of Health Promotion and Education .....	14
The Sexual Assault Violence Prevention Office/Sexual Assault Response Team .....	15
Health Service.....	15
Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity.....	16
Office of Religious and Spiritual Life and Contemplative Practices .....	17
Office of Student Growth and Engagement.....	18
Student Employment.....	19
Athletics and Physical Education .....	19
<b>ACADEMIC INFORMATION</b> .....	21
First-Year Writing Seminar Requirement .....	21
Quantitative Course Requirement.....	21
Foreign Language Proficiency Requirement .....	22

Distribution Requirements.....	22
Pre-Matriculation Credit.....	22
Advanced Course Placement .....	24
Preparation for Teacher Certification .....	24
Preparation for Law School.....	25
Preparation for Medical School .....	26
Preparation for Education Abroad .....	26
<b>REGISTRATION FOR COURSES .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Guidelines for Course Selection .....	28
To Prospective Science Majors .....	30
Yearlong Courses .....	30
About Grades .....	31
Statement on Assessment .....	32
Now It's Up to You!.....	32
A Note about Ask Banner .....	33
<b>FIRST-YEAR WRITING SEMINARS.....</b>	<b>33</b>
Fall Sections .....	34
<b>DEPARTMENTS OF INSTRUCTION AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>85</b>
The VCard.....	85
Banks .....	85
Mailroom Hours and Services .....	86
Shipping and Receiving .....	86
Transportation and Automobile Regulations .....	87
Vassar College Store Hours for Move-in Week, Fall 2020 .....	87
Important Telephone Numbers.....	88
Quick Reference Web Addresses .....	88

# THE VASSAR FIRST YEAR

As you begin your first year of college, please consider the values of the community you are about to join as articulated in the Vassar catalogue describing “A Community of Special Character”: “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.” The full statement is printed on the inside cover of this handbook. Please read it and reflect on the goals and expectations it describes as you prepare “to engage actively in the creation of a community of intellectual freedom, mutually understood dignity, and civil discourse.”

Vassar has set these lofty goals with the confidence that our students are both able and eager to embrace the challenge. Vassar places considerable faith and control in the hands of its students, who are expected to find their own way of taking the liberal arts education offered at Vassar and making it inimitably 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 adventurousness. 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 and alternative course options that take advantage of the many possibilities Vassar offers you.

## General Education Student Learning Goals

Recently, the faculty of Vassar College endorsed General Education Student Learning Goals, which are listed below, to provide a touchstone for ongoing conversations on campus among students, faculty, and the college community about the meaning and goals of a liberal arts education at Vassar.

No one course, department, or division will address all of the goals, but they are addressed through the totality of a student’s education at Vassar. They should be interpreted broadly to acknowledge the different approaches of our myriad disciplines and the self-direction and empowerment of Vassar students to make independent choices in conversation with faculty advisors and mentors. We envisage that throughout your career at Vassar, you will aspire to achieve significantly in these four areas, although we recognize that students will not achieve all of these goals in the same way and to the same extent. These learning goals serve as resources for pre-major advising conversations and support student planning for your comprehensive liberal education.

## GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

**1. Independent Thinking, Creativity, and Intellectual Curiosity:** Students will demonstrate independent thinking and intellectual curiosity in their chosen field and across a broad array of disciplines.

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

**2. Critical and Analytical Reasons:** Students will demonstrate critical and analytical reasoning across a broad array of disciplines.

- Apply relevant criteria to create, critically analyze, interpret, or reflect ethically on a text, artwork, performance, or other product of human creativity and reasoning
- Make valid connections among different disciplines or distinct bodies of knowledge.
- Demonstrate quantitative reasoning by evaluating arguments framed in quantitative or numerical terms.
- Demonstrate scientific reasoning by applying inductive and/or deductive analysis to evaluate a hypothesis.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use information to create new knowledge and participate ethically in communities of learning.
- Demonstrate the ability to use general or discipline-specific technologies to identify, retrieve, analyze, and communicate ideas and information.

**3. Written and Oral Communication:** Students will demonstrate proficiency in written and oral communication.

- Construct a clear and persuasive written argument using appropriate style, structure, and voice.
- Construct a clear and persuasive oral argument using appropriate techniques that address the needs of the audience.
- Listen effectively.

**4. Engagement in Diversity, Inclusion and Equity:** Students will develop competencies to understand and relate to diversity so as to be fully engaged citizens who promote an equitable and inclusive society

- Demonstrate the ability to explain and reflect on important issues within one's own cultural context and the cultural context of others.
- Engage with those who differ from oneself in beliefs, behaviors, values, or views.
- Function effectively and work collaboratively in diverse groups.
- Build and sustain community by applying knowledge to help others.
- Demonstrate proficiency speaking, reading, writing, and understanding a language other than English.

## New Student Orientation

Classes are scheduled to begin this year on Monday, August 31. A detailed schedule for this year's orientation activities and move-in dates and times will be provided at a later date online. Please regularly check the dean of first-year students website <http://deanoffirstyearstudents.vassar.edu> and at <http://newstudents.vassar.edu> for any changes or updates.

The activities planned for the days and weeks before classes begin serve a variety of needs, social as well as academic. Academic advising and registration for classes take place at various times throughout the summer. Orientation activities on campus may include general assemblies, residence hall meetings, and discussion groups designed to ease your transition to college life and to inform you of the rights and responsibilities that come with being a member of the Vassar community.

## 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 in order 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 of this handbook in order to familiarize yourself with the great range of choices before you. The section on "Registration for Courses" 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 made available at the sites above. Please check them regularly for new additions. You will be informed of your pre-major advisor in late July and will be asked to meet with them remotely to plan your schedule for the fall semester.

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 2020/21 offerings. The Vassar catalogue, found online, is the primary source for all information on the academic organization of the college, its requirements for graduation, course offerings, and so forth. If questions arise as you read what follows, please also consult the online catalogue.

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 you may have. See, too, "A Note about Ask Banner" in the "Registration for Courses" section of this handbook for information about the online system. Additional information about student life at Vassar, including a list of student organizations sponsored by the Vassar Student Association, can be found in *The Student Handbook*, which is available online. You may always call the Office of the Dean of First-Year Students at 845-437-5258 with any questions as well.

And do remember to complete your Statement of Academic Interests online by July 1, which I will use to assign you a faculty pre-major advisor.

I look forward to meeting you this fall.

Jennifer Herrera  
*Dean of First-Year Students and Lecturer in Chemistry*

## **ACADEMIC, RESIDENTIAL LIFE, AND EXTRACURRICULAR RESOURCES**

“Can I take that wonderful-sounding 200-level course on Asian-American literature?” “I’m running a fever and can’t get to class. What do I do?” “My roommate and I don’t seem to have hit it off. Can we switch roommates?” Questions of all kinds arise as we make our way in a new environment. Answers are readily available from a range of resources; the information offered below should help you determine where to turn with a particular question.

### **The Dean of First-Year Students**

The dean of first-year students counsels and advises all first-year students on academic matters and oversees academic regulations as they affect new students. The dean of first-year students is a member of the faculty and serves on a number of faculty and administrative committees responsible for the welfare of Vassar students. The dean also assigns faculty pre-major advisors and co-chairs the New Student Orientation Committee.

Should you, as a first-year student, experience any personal, family, or medical difficulties that threaten to impact your academic performance, the dean of first-year students will work closely with you to help you make full use of the college’s resources and support systems and will advise you regarding the various options available to you for some form of academic relief.

Any first-year student who needs to be away from campus because of an illness or family emergency or who is considering a leave of absence or withdrawal from Vassar should consult the dean of first-year students.

Jennifer Herrera is the dean of first-year students. Her office, open weekdays from 8:30 am–5:00 pm, is located inside the Office of the Dean of Studies (Main N-128). Appointments may be made by calling 845-437-5258. Note that office availability may be limited this year. Please email [jeherrera@vassar.edu](mailto:jeherrera@vassar.edu) or [deanoffirstyear@vassar.edu](mailto:deanoffirstyear@vassar.edu) to schedule a meeting.

## 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, which you will complete online. (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.) The first meeting for new students with their pre-major advisors will occur remotely between August 3 and August 14. This meeting provides an opportunity for you to become acquainted with your pre-major advisor, to discuss any questions that you might have and to register for courses. 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 kind of special permission. Your pre-major advisor is also a great resource for general information about the college and the curriculum. Please take time to get to know your pre-major advisor and allow your advisor to get to know you.

At Vassar, there are many people to turn to for academic advice, so you will need to take the initiative in seeking out particular kinds of information. While pre-major advisors can assist you in coordinating your individual program, no one 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 instructor or department chair. Individual teachers and department or program representatives are available in their offices both during the initial days of the semester and as the term progresses.

After orientation, it is your responsibility to schedule all appointments with your advisor. Learn your advisor's office hours and arrange to meet with your advisor in advance of all pertinent deadlines. Most faculty members can be reached via email. If you are unable to reach your advisor, your instructor, or a 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 about your overall curricular planning throughout your years of study.

## Libraries

You can find books and journals, online databases, sound recordings and music scores, documentary and feature films, rare books and manuscripts, and digital collections in the Vassar libraries. If you have difficulty finding what you're looking for (or even knowing where to start), ask for a librarian at a circulation desk or call us from the phone located in the Cornaro Room (the room with the stained glass window in the Main Library). You can also send the librarians a message to set up a meeting by clicking on the Ask a Librarian link on the library homepage (<http://library.vassar.edu>),

The Main Library also houses a 24-hour study space, Design and Collaboration Studio, the Writing Center, and the Quantitative Reasoning Center. The Music Library can be found in Skinner Hall.

## The Learning, Teaching, and Research Center

The Learning, Teaching, and Research Center (LTRC) is dedicated to addressing the needs of Vassar's diverse student body. Our goal is to enable students to maximize their unique educational experiences at Vassar College. We therefore provide an extensive range of academic resources that foster the fundamental aim of a liberal arts education: to facilitate the intellectual and professional growth of ethical, informed, and reflective students who can engage creatively with important social issues. The LTRC houses a peer-staffed Writing Center and Quantitative Reasoning Center, including a Supplemental Instruction Program for select quantitative analysis (QA) courses. We also offer expert learning support with a focus on developing individual academic skills.

For more information, please visit <https://ltrc.vassar.edu>.

## Community-Engaged Learning

Community-Engaged Learning is an experiential educational opportunity which helps to deepen classroom learning, provide experience, and foster civic engagement while supporting the work of our community partners. The Office of Community-Engaged Learning connects students to Community-Engaged Learning opportunities with a variety of agencies (mostly non-profit and governmental) in Poughkeepsie, the Mid-Hudson region, and New York City. Every student electing Community-Engaged Learning is sponsored by a faculty member who helps the student reflect on and integrate their experiential work with academic work. Students receive credit in the department of the faculty sponsor and students may need a prerequisite or corequisite course in the sponsoring department. Internships during the summer may also be eligible for Community-Engaged Learning credit. All Community-Engaged Learning credit is considered "ungraded" work. Community-Engaged Learning is open to students in all classes who have appropriate qualifications.

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 [Community-Engaged Learning](#). For the application process, current opportunities, and forms, please visit: [bit.ly/vassarocel](http://bit.ly/vassarocel).

## Career Development

The Career Development Office (CDO), located in Main S-170, supports members of the Vassar community as they explore their interests, define their career goals, and seek their next opportunity for personal growth and professional development. The CDO 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, summer jobs, and post-graduate opportunities
- Creating opportunities for students to engage with alumnae/i for the purpose of career connections and mentorship
- Supporting the graduate school/law school research and application process

Because life-work planning is a continual process, we offer assistance throughout your college years as well as after you graduate. First-year students are encouraged to engage with the Career Development Office early 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 CDO's staff, resources and extensive network of alumnae/i to assist with your plans. Stop by during Career Studio hours (M-F 12:30-3:30 pm) to explore the career resources available, or check out Handshake, the CDO's internship/job database and event calendar: <https://vassar.joinhandshake.com>

Appointments with our friendly staff are available Monday through Friday, and may be scheduled via Handshake, by phone at 845-437-5285, or by stopping by the office (located in Main S-170).

For more information, [visit http://careers.vassar.edu](http://careers.vassar.edu), or email [cdo@vassar.edu](mailto:cdo@vassar.edu).

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

The Associate Dean of the College for Student Living and Wellness has the responsibility for coordinating several aspects of the non-academic lives of Vassar students. Specifically, the Associate Dean of the College for Student Living and Wellness oversees the following student service areas: Counseling Service, Health Service, Health Promotion and Education, Residential Life, and Support Advocacy and Violence Prevention (SAVP). The associate dean regularly meets with the directors of the student services that report to him; together they establish the goals and priorities of each office. The associate dean oversees the student conduct system and, along with the Dean of First-Year Students, co-chairs the New Student Orientation Committee. The associate dean also serves as an advocate for students and their needs.

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

SSN members may share information about students who appear to be in trouble (e.g., who appear to be at risk to themselves or others, whose academic situation is dire, who are experiencing significant personal problems, or whose behavior is alarming other members of the college community). The group then determines how best to support the student or students. Please note that confidential information is not shared by Counseling Service, Health Service or the Director of Health Promotion and Education.

For more information, visit <https://deanofstudents.vassar.edu>.

## **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.

## **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. They 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.

## **Student Fellows**

In each house, Student Fellows serve as peer advisors to a cluster 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 a peer-mentor 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. Student fellows are carefully selected for their ability to relate to others, their sense of responsibility, judgment, discretion, and maturity. They are an invaluable campus resource.

You will first meet your student fellow on Monday afternoon, August 24 with the rest of your fellow group for introductions and information about the orientation schedule. Student fellows are available as a resource and peer mentor to you throughout the entire year.

## **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 Student Fellows, advise the House Team, adjudicate student conduct meetings, serve as the Administrator-on-Call for emergency response, develop educational/social/recreational programming, mediate conflict resolution, and more.

## **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. House student advisors are involved in the selection, training, and advising of the student fellows in their building.

## **House Officers**

Each residential house elects five student officers who participate in House Team along with student fellows and house fellow interns: the house president, programming director, treasurer, secretary/communications director, and first-year representative. The house officers work closely with the Residential Life staff and House Team to ensure the general welfare of students and to promote a sense of community within each house.

For more information, please visit <https://residentiallife.vassar.edu>.

## **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, 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 at times refer students to resources outside of the Vassar community depending on the needs of the student and the limitations of the Counseling Service. 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 Associate Dean of the College for Student Living and Wellness Office to assist in paying for off-campus appointment co-payments.

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.

Please also refer to the Counseling Service website <https://counselingservice.vassar.edu/> for self help resources, including information about how to access T.A.O., a self-guided web-based tool consisting of psychoeducational and interactive modules, practice tools, journals and progress measures.

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.

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. Stop by Metcalf or 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 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 judgement.

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

For more information, please visit <https://healthpromotionandeducation.vassar.edu/>.

## **The Support, Advocacy, and Violence Prevention Office**

The Support, Advocacy, and Violence Prevention (SAVP) Office aims to prevent and respond to sexual assault, relationship abuse, stalking, and gender-based sexual harassment through prevention education, collaboration, outreach, and advocacy.

The SAVP Director and SAVP Program Coordinator provide support, advocacy, and information for survivors of sexual and interpersonal violence. The office also oversees SAVP Advocates, trained Vassar faculty, administrators, and staff, who are available 24/7 for support. SAVP is a private resource, meaning that any information shared with them remains confidential unless there is a threat to an individual or community safety. They are required to fill out an anonymous report form for federal Clery data, but this form does not include any of the student's identifying information. SAVP is committed to a survivor-centered approach, which means that if a student is victimized, SAVP will provide information about available options and resources and assist students to make decisions about what services they would like to access based on what feels most comfortable for them.

The SAVP Office also coordinates prevention education for the campus community throughout the year. The SAVP Director and Program Coordinator 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 organization leaders, employees, and first-year students during orientation.

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

The SAVP Director's office is in Metcalf House room 4 and can be reached at 845-437-7863 or [savp@vassar.edu](mailto:savp@vassar.edu). The Program Coordinator's office is located in the first floor Metcalf Solarium and can be reached at 845-437-7975 or [savp@vassar.edu](mailto:savp@vassar.edu). For more information, please visit [savp.vassar.edu](http://savp.vassar.edu).

## **Health Service**

The Student Health Service, located in Baldwin House, provides medical and nursing care by qualified personnel including a physician, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and nurses.

Health Service hours are 9:00 am–5:00 pm Monday through Friday, and 12:00 noon–4:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Daily clinics for medical, nursing, and gynecological care are maintained on weekdays from 9:00 am–12:00 pm and 1:00–4:00 pm. Appointments can be scheduled during office hours by calling 845-437-5800; for Gynecology, call 845-437-5818. After clinic hours, a nurse is present on site to see to urgent problems until 5:00 pm on weekdays and from 12:00 noon–4:00 pm on weekends. Emergencies and urgent care walk-ins can be seen immediately when the Health Service is open. When the Health Service is closed, students may access the “Night Nurse Triage” line by calling 845-437-5800. A member of the medical staff is on call outside of clinic hours.

In case of a medical emergency, call the Campus Response Center (CRC) at 845-437-7333 to dispatch Vassar College EMTs or request an ambulance.

In the medical clinics, routine primary care is offered with referral to local specialists or hospitals as needed. Health promotion and disease prevention are emphasized through a variety of programs. Gynecological services, including birth control counseling, are available in addition to sexual health testing. Similarly, other medical lab testing is available. Therapeutic medications and prescriptions may be provided to students at a minimal charge.

For more information, please visit <https://healthservice.vassar.edu> or email: [health@vassar.edu](mailto:health@vassar.edu).

## **Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity**

Many Vassar students need accommodations or support services because of a learning disability, AD/HD, a chronic medical condition, vision or hearing loss, a mobility or orthopedic impairment, a psychological diagnosis, or because they are in recovery for substance abuse. The Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity is committed to helping coordinate and providing 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 should self-identify to the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity as soon as possible to request academic accommodations (preferably by June 15, 2020) or residential life accommodations (preferably by June 1, 2020) for matriculation in the fall. 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 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:

- 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)
- Note taker service
- Modified course load
- Housing (e.g., single room, accessible room, air conditioner)
- Meal plan accommodations
- Sign language interpreters/remote closed captioning

Please contact the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity to learn more about our services and to inform us about your accommodation needs or concerns. 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 call 845-437-7584 or visit <https://aeo.vassar.edu>.

## **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 12 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 includes a full-time associate dean, a full-time director for Jewish Life, a part-time advisor for Muslim Student Life, part-time affiliate advisors for the Episcopal, Roman Catholic, and InterVarsity communities on campus, and a faculty advisor for the Buddhist Sangha.

During 2020-2021, renovations will be done for the office to move into its new home in Pratt House, behind Ely Hall; Pratt will serve as a vibrant hub for discussions, communal meals, contemplative practices, and other student-initiated gatherings. 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 new 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 <https://religiousandspirituallife.vassar.edu>, email [rsl@vassar.edu](mailto:rsl@vassar.edu), or call 845-437-5550.

## Office of Student Growth & Engagement

The Office of 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: First Year Experience (FYE), the ALANA Center, Office of International Services (OIS), the LGBTQ Center, the Posse Veterans Program, the Transitions Program, and the Women's Center. SGE designs and implements student engagement opportunities, which guide intellectual and personal development, to ease the transition to college and achieve a sense of fulfillment and belonging for all students at Vassar. 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).

**The ALANA 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 students. The center provides a comfortable gathering space and offices for student organizations that support students of color and offers opportunities for leadership development, intra-cultural and cross-cultural dialogues, community-building, lectures and other co-curricular programming, as well as heritage month programming. The center, a freestanding building adjacent to the Powerhouse Theater, also catalogs cultural journals/newsletters, educational videos, career development, scholarship and fellowship information. Please reach out to **Kevin Collins**, Director of the ALANA Center, for more information: [kcollins@vassar.edu](mailto:kcollins@vassar.edu).

**The Office of International Services** 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 adjusting to and embracing a new culture and also 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. Please reach out to **Andrew Meade**, Director of International Services, for more information: [anmeade@vassar.edu](mailto:anmeade@vassar.edu).

**The LGBTQ and Gender Resources Office** oversees the LGBTQ+ Center and the Women's Center. The LGBTQ Center, located in College Center 213, is a place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and ally 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. The Women's Center is located in College Center 235 and offers a community space and programming on various components of gender equity, women's leadership, empowerment, and health. Please reach out to **Danushi Fernando**, Director of LGBTQ and Gender Resources, for more information: [dfernando@vassar.edu](mailto:dfernando@vassar.edu).

**The Transitions Program** serves as a support for 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 Transitions 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 Transitions Office is located in Main C110 and the Transitions Living Room (lounge space) is located in Josselyn House on the 2nd floor, through the multipurpose room in 234. Please reach out to **Capria Berry**, Director of Transitions, for more information: [caberry@vassar.edu](mailto:caberry@vassar.edu).

To learn more about the Office of Student Growth & Engagement, please visit <https://studentengagement.vassar.edu/> or email [DeanofSGE@vassar.edu](mailto:DeanofSGE@vassar.edu).

## Student Employment

Student Employment, located in Student Financial Services, Main S-199, helps students secure part-time on-campus employment in departments throughout the college as well as part-time off-campus community service work-study employment. Students who qualify for work study receive first priority consideration for campus jobs. Remaining jobs are available for any student who wishes to work. In general, students can work an average of eight hours per week. Students may choose to work fall semester, spring semester, or the entire academic year. Job registration for the academic year begins in late summer. Registration for break (i.e., winter, spring, summer) positions takes place several times throughout the year. Prior to beginning work at Vassar, students must complete I-9 and W-4 forms.

For more information, please visit the Student Financial Services website at <http://studentfinancialservices.vassar.edu/jobs/>, which will provide all Vassar student employment related resources, or email [stuemp@vassar.edu](mailto:stuemp@vassar.edu).

## 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), 13 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 23 varsity teams. There are sports programs for both men and women in basketball, cross-country, fencing, lacrosse, soccer, squash, swimming and diving, tennis, 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 an on-campus medical examination arranged through the athletic trainers (845-437-7843). This examination must take place prior to participation in any practices. Contact the Department of Athletics and Physical Education (845-437-7450) with any questions concerning participation in varsity sports. Practices for some fall sports may begin prior to classes. Please call the office for further information.

**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 and an on-campus medical examination arranged through the athletic trainers (845-437-7843). Contact the Department of Athletics and Physical Education (845-437- 7450) with any questions concerning participation in these programs.

## 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, flag football, 3-on-3 basketball, 5-on-5 basketball, volleyball, wiffleball, badminton, floor hockey, kan jam, golf, tennis, ultimate frisbee, kickball, softball, table tennis and more. All registrations are done through [IMLeagues.com/Vassar](http://IMLeagues.com/Vassar) and you can follow us on Twitter at [@VassarRec](https://twitter.com/VassarRec) or on Facebook at [facebook.com/vassarrecreation](https://facebook.com/vassarrecreation). 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, 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 [IMLeagues.com/ Vassar](http://IMLeagues.com/Vassar); you can follow us on Twitter at [@VassarRec](https://twitter.com/VassarRec) or on Facebook at [facebook.com/vassarrecreation](https://facebook.com/vassarrecreation). Please contact Mike Callahan at 845-437-7471 or at [micallahan@vassar.edu](mailto:micallahan@vassar.edu) for additional information.

## **ACADEMIC INFORMATION**

This section of the handbook contains information you will need as you decide on the courses you would like to take in your first semester. As you look through these pages of academic information and the descriptions of departments and programs, do remember some of 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.”

At the end of this section you will find the instructions for registration. Before you go to register, however, please read what follows carefully. You can also consult the Vassar catalogue online at <http://catalogue.vassar.edu> if you have any further questions.

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

### **First-Year Writing Seminar Requirement**

All entering first-year students are required to complete at least one First-Year Writing Seminar during the first two semesters of study. The First-Year Writing Seminars provide entering students the opportunity to develop as critical thinkers in a small class setting along with fellow first-year students who are making the transition to college work. These courses, offered in a variety of disciplines, are limited to first-year students and have a maximum enrollment of 17. Particular attention is given to writing as an intellectual process as well as the effective expression of ideas in both written and oral form. Please consult the section on “First-Year Writing Seminars” in this handbook for the 2020/21 offerings.

### **Quantitative Course Requirement**

Facility in quantitative reasoning is an important component of a liberal 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 course work 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 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, Turkish, and Yiddish.

All three- and four-year students whose first language is English are required before graduation to demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language. Departmental proficiency examinations will be given in the afternoon on the first day of classes in the fall semester; the exact time and locations will be listed in the orientation schedule. Other methods by which you may meet this requirement are listed in the section on *Registration for Courses*.

## 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. In order 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 course work outside the major in addition to overall academic excellence. You should not take two courses in a single department in the same semester in your first year. 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. Exams such as the Advanced Placement exams (APs) and the 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). A maximum of 2.0 units of exam-based pre-matriculation credit will be awarded.

2. College or university courses completed while a student was attending high school. Students may not apply for transfer credit for these courses until after they matriculate and are active students at Vassar. A maximum of 6.0 units of credit will be awarded for college or university courses taken before enrolling at Vassar.

**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.**

Any questions about pre-matriculation credit should be directed to the Office of the Dean of Studies (845-437-7553).

## **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. College courses taken while a student is still attending secondary school must be taught on a college or university campus with other undergraduate students and taught by a qualified college teacher. Programs in which college instructors teach the course at the secondary school will not be considered for transfer credit. Credit for these courses cannot be transferred into Vassar if they are granted high school credit or used to fulfill any high school graduation requirements. Credit will be granted only for coursework completed on a college or university campus along with other undergraduates, taught by a qualified college teacher, not taken as part of a dual-enrollment program, and neither granted high school credit nor used to meet high school graduation requirements.

Students may not apply for transfer credit for these courses until after they matriculate and are active students at Vassar. The minimum grade required for any course to be eligible for transfer credit is C.

## **EXAM-BASED PRE-MATRICULATION CREDIT**

### **AP Credit**

If you have taken CEEB Advanced Placement examinations, you may be eligible for college credit. 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). All scores should be sent within the first month of your first year.

The general policy: Students will receive 1.0 unit of pre-matriculation transfer credit for every score of 4 or 5, subject to the 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 the "Departments of Instruction and Multidisciplinary Programs" section of this handbook 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.

The following departments offer exams for credit for those students who do not receive AP credit: Italian, mathematics, music, and Russian studies. Please contact the department for information on the scheduling of their exam.

### **International Baccalaureate Program (IB)**

The International Baccalaureate Program is described as a “demanding pre-university course of study that leads to examinations; it is designed for highly motivated secondary school students and incorporates the best elements of national systems without being based on any one.” Scores achieved for the Higher Level examinations are eligible for pre-matriculation transfer credit. Students who achieve a score of 5, 6, or 7 on an IB HL exam will receive 1.0 unit of transfer credit, subject 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.

## **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. Advanced course placement advising will be done as part of the academic advising sessions in the academic departments and programs on Thursday morning, August 29. It is crucial that students attend these advising sessions to receive proper placement in courses.

If you feel that you might be eligible for advanced course placement in a particular department, you can also contact the chair of the department. If you have any questions for specific departments prior to 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 give examinations for placement or credit or both. All examinations are offered either over the summer or in the first month of the fall term and may be taken in the first year only.

## **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 catalogue and on the web at <http://education.vassar.edu>. 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 Mario Roman, Jannette Swanson, and Stacy Bingham in the Career Development Office (CDO), with faculty support from Professor Jamie Kelly in the Philosophy Department. Students interested in law-related careers should seek out these advisors to discuss any questions they have with respect to 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, there are no specific courses 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 take to prepare for law school, there is no single discipline in which students should major.

The CDO has a variety of resources available to help students explore their interest in legal careers. Additionally, the office can help students connect with law-related summer opportunities and alumnae/i working in the field of law. Students interested in law should specify this as an industry preference on Handshake (the CDO’s job/internship database and event calendar) to receive targeted communications about pre-law events:

<https://vassar.joinhandshake.com>

For more information, please stop by the office (located in Main S-170), visit <https://careers.vassar.edu>, or email [cdo@vassar.edu](mailto:cdo@vassar.edu).

## Preparation for Medical School

A student interested in medical school may major in any field. The basic requirements for medical schools and other health professional schools include one year of the following subjects: biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics. Science courses must have a laboratory component. A year of English and a year of mathematics, usually calculus and/or statistics, are strongly recommended and sometimes required. Courses in psychology and sociology are also strongly recommended. Pre-med students are therefore advised to elect an English course in their first year, as well as a science sequence of some sort. Medical schools require grades in the core courses, so extra caution and careful consultation is needed if a student is considering an NRO election in any of these courses.

Students who are 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 also to the “Medicine” section of “Preparation for Graduate Study” in the Vassar catalogue. It is important to know that preparation for many of the health professions does not demand a natural science major. Most often, the best advice we can offer is that students select the major field of study that most interests them because they will be happier and thereby increase the likelihood of a strong academic record.

If you are considering a career in the health professions (medical, dental, veterinary, public health), you should plan to attend the meeting held by the pre-health advisors on Wednesday, July 29. Careful planning of the first academic year is essential. Students should call the Office for Fellowships and Pre-Health Advising, located in Main N-162 (845-437-5263), to schedule an appointment with a pre-med advisor if they cannot attend the meeting and feel that they need additional guidance before making a final selection of courses for the first term.

For more information, please visit <https://fellowships.vassar.edu/health/>.

## Preparation for Education Abroad

If you are considering spending a term or your entire junior year studying abroad, you should give serious consideration to your course selections starting in your first year. If you are considering a non-English-speaking country, foreign language study is of the utmost importance and should be considered early in your academic career. Students must demonstrate on their application that they have acquired sufficient area studies coursework to support their academic proposals for learning abroad. Vassar College education abroad is based on a home tuition policy and your financial aid “travels” with you.

Over one hundred programs across more than 60 countries are available to students. For more information, please visit the Office of International Programs website: <https://internationalprograms.vassar.edu/>. You are also welcome to visit the office located in Main N-173 during walk in hours, or you can make an appointment by calling 845-437-5260.

# REGISTRATION FOR COURSES

During the summer, you will pre-register for your fall 2020 classes by using the electronic pre-registration form, which can be found at [newstudents.vassar.edu](http://newstudents.vassar.edu). In order to complete this form, you will need to consult:

- 2020/2021 catalogue found at [catalogue.vassar.edu](http://catalogue.vassar.edu)
- *The First-Year Handbook*
- electronic schedule of classes found at [newstudents.vassar.edu](http://newstudents.vassar.edu)
- your Pre-Major Advisor

Please be sure to pay careful attention to the information given on the Schedule of Classes Information Pages, available as a link from the online schedule of classes.

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

1. **Summer Pre-registration.** Over the summer, you will pre-register for your academic classes. You will complete your schedule with the help of your faculty advisor. List your first choice for a First-Year Writing Seminar, as well as three alternate First-Year Writing Seminars in case your first choice is unavailable. 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 three additional one unit courses (or 1.5 units if electing elementary Chinese or Japanese). If there are no seats available in any of the First-Year Writing Seminars you have selected, the Registrar will attempt to place you in three of the 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 new students website, there are a number of events planned to help you complete your class schedule. During the week of July 27 faculty will post research presentations online and departments and programs will hold remote advising sessions as well as offer pre-recorded sessions. You will be able to consult with any department or program about appropriate course selections including advanced course placement or special permission. There will be special advising sessions devoted to pre-law, pre-health, teacher certification, English, art, and math and sciences. After gathering the necessary information and making additions and revisions to your course selections, you will meet with your pre-major advisor remotely and all first-year students will officially register for fall courses between Aug 3-14.
3. **Add Period (through September 8).** Once classes begin, you may continue to add courses, up to a maximum of 4.5 units, to your schedule until Tuesday, September 8. 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 8.

4. **Drop Period (through October 16).** Students may drop courses (but not below 3.5 units) with their advisor's approval until Friday, October 18. A copy of your final registration will be available online at Vassar's website via Ask Banner for your viewing after October 16. 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.

## 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 will be limited to no more than 4 classroom-based courses (designated with "CLS" on Ask Banner) in any given semester. Students may also elect .5 units of Intensive (designated with "INT" on Ask Banner) coursework for a total of 4.5 units in a given semester. Vassar offers a limited number of 0.5 unit courses, mostly in the departments of music and physical education. You will need to consult the schedule of classes on the [newstudents.vassar.edu](http://newstudents.vassar.edu) website for a thorough listing of these and other half-unit academic courses offered in the fall semester. Elementary and intermediate language courses in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean grant 1.5 units per semester.

### Intensives

Intensives are a new style of course offering and are innovative learning opportunities that will complement traditional classroom courses by extending beyond the classroom for a variety of 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 process, similar to a senior thesis or independent work. Please reach out to the professor of the course 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 the section on “First-Year Writing Seminars” in this handbook for the 2020/21 offerings. Courses are offered in both fall and spring semesters, with the far greater number in the fall.
- 2. Quantitative Analysis Requirement.** All students are required before the beginning of their third year to complete one unit of course work requiring the learning and practice of a significant amount of quantitative analysis through the semester. 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 catalogue.
- 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 will need to 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 done 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 exam or of 600–800 on an SAT II test in a foreign language. If you have Higher Level IB credit in a foreign language, please consult with the Dean of Studies Office. For the rest of you: although this is a graduation requirement, we strongly recommend that you complete it early in your Vassar career. “Proficiency” at Vassar is the level achieved at the completion of the elementary 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 applying to a non-English-speaking country for study abroad, you will need to have completed, by the end of your sophomore year, at least a full year at the intermediate level of the appropriate foreign language.

Proficiency can also be demonstrated by passing an exam prepared by Vassar faculty. Proficiency exams in Ancient Greek, 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 are continuing a language studied prior to Vassar are placed at the level appropriate to their previous training. To identify

the appropriate level for you, please consult the guidelines given by the various language departments in the section on “Departments of Instruction” in this handbook. Additional placement advising will be given by the foreign language faculty remotely during the week of July 27. First-year students are not encouraged to take two elementary level foreign languages.

**To summarize: All students whose first language is English are required before graduation to demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language by one of the following six ways:**

- a. one year of foreign language study at Vassar at the introductory level or one semester at the intermediate level or above;
- b. 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;
- c. an AP exam score of 4 or 5 in a foreign language;
- d. SAT II achievement test score in a foreign language of at least 600;
- e. equivalent foreign language coursework completed at another institution; such courses may involve languages not taught at Vassar; or
- f. 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 a major 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 in order 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 catalogue. 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 classes, with “a” courses offered in the fall, “b” courses in the spring. All elementary foreign language courses, however, 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 yearlong 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 catalogue, “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

Final grades are released to students electronically by the Office of the Registrar at the conclusion of each semester. Copies of a student’s transcript are made available to the student’s faculty advisor (to assist with advising) and the Dean of Studies Office. Any other request to see a student’s grades must be accompanied by written permission of the student.

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; that is, the grades do not transfer for calculation in the Vassar grade point average. All post-matriculation transfer credit will be listed on the Vassar transcript along with the grades earned at the home institution. However, in all cases, only Vassar work will be computed into the Vassar cumulative grade point average.

There are two types of nongraded Vassar work: a) courses which 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 catalogue. 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 six weeks of classes (in the fall, October 16, the same date as the drop deadline).

Although official grade reports are issued only at the completion of each semester, instructors are encouraged to notify the Dean of Studies Office of any students who are performing below satisfactory (“C”) level at any point during the semester. Class deans and 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 towards 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 [newstudents.vassar.edu](http://newstudents.vassar.edu) 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 the 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) weekdays during summer office hours (8:30am–4:30pm, EST).

## A Note about Ask Banner

Ask Banner is a link at the bottom of the Vassar homepage under “Community” that will give you access to a wide range of important information (<https://aisapps.vassar.edu/askbanner/>). The General Information link (<https://aisapps.vassar.edu/askbanner/geninfo.html>) on the Ask Banner site will allow you to view the online schedule of classes as well as 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 (<https://aisapps.vassar.edu/askbanner/stuinfo.html>)

## FIRST-YEAR WRITING SEMINARS

Every entering first-year student is required to elect 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 make the 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, as well as during the add period at the beginning of term. Students not taking a First-Year Writing Seminar in the fall will be given priority in selecting a First-Year Writing Seminar 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 either to major in English or to pursue intermediate work in English 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)

### **Africana Studies 109a Beyond the Veil and Islamic Terrorism: Modern Arabic Literature**

This course introduces students to modern and contemporary literature emanating from North Africa and the Middle East. The authors we read write in Arabic, French, and English. However, all the course readings are in English Translation.

The themes we examine range from the seemingly unresolved tension between tradition and modernity in postcolonial MENA (Middle East and North Africa) societies to the role orientalism and islamophobia play in obstructing productive and much-needed East-West dialogues in today's—some would call it—neocolonial and globalized world. We also zero in on the interplay between gender, religion, and politics in the MENA region as we discuss the condition of women and sexual minorities caught between the seemingly irreconcilable discourses of Islamic law and international human rights legal frameworks. In the last part of the course, we read two recent first-person narratives. The first depicts the ongoing crisis of illegal immigration from Africa and the MENA region into “Fortress Europe” and attending human cost. The second narrative is an intimate portrayal of the sectarian strife and human rights abuses promulgated in the prisons of the dictatorial regime in Syria.

Students taking this course gain an understanding of some of the salient social, political, and broadly cultural complexities of MENA societies. They also begin to appreciate the complex historical and geopolitical roots of widespread yet, sometimes, little examined propositions, like the incompatibility of Islam and Western modernity and democratic rule, and the need to liberate Muslim women from their cultures.

The course is open to first-year students only; and it satisfies the college requirement for the Freshman Writing Seminar. As such, it is a writing-intensive course! Therefore, as we explore the themes and issues noted above orally in our class discussions, you also hone your skills in finding, using, and citing evidence; building persuasive arguments; using language effectively; organizing sentences and paragraphs clearly; and developing your own prose style. Writing workshops are an integral part of the course, and you work on commenting on and revising both your own and other people's drafts.

AFRS 109.01 TR 1:30-2:45pm Mootacem Mhiri

### **Africana Studies 175a Mandela: Race, Resistance and Renaissance in South Africa**

(Same as HIST 175) This course critically explores the history and politics of South Africa in the twentieth century through the prism of the life, politics, and experiences of one of its most iconic figures, Nelson Mandela. After almost three decades of incarceration for resisting Apartheid, Mandela became the first democratically elected president of a free South Africa in 1994. It was

an inspirational moment in the global movement and the internal struggle to dismantle Apartheid and to transform South Africa into a democratic, non-racial, and just society. Using Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, as our point of departure, the course discusses some of the complex ideas, people, and developments that shaped South Africa and Mandela's life in the twentieth century, including: indigenous culture, religion, and institutions; colonialism, race, and ethnicity; nationalism, mass resistance, and freedom; and human rights, social justice, and post-conflict reconstruction.

AFRS 175.01 MW 12:00-1:15pm Ismail Rashid

### **American Studies 101a Sending Smoke Signals: Representations & Realities of Contemporary Native American Life**

(Same as ENGL 101) How do films such as Sherman Alexie's *Smoke Signals* speak back to, critique, or wholly ignore films like *Dances With Wolves*, *Avatar*, or Disney's *Pocahontas*? How do Navajo poets like Esther Belin, Luci Tapahonso, or Orlando White engage similar critiques of twentieth-century translators of Native life and culture like John Neihardt or Theodora Kroeber? How does the work of Indigenous artists like James Luna, Rebecca Belmore, or George Longfish fly in the face of stereotypes of the stoic noble or fierce savage Indian? Interrogating depictions of Native American life through the use of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, periodicals, film, art, and performance, we will use the study and practice of writing to explore a segment of North America which is commonly misunderstood by non-Indigenous people. Because this misrepresented and misconstrued imagining of Native Americans says nothing about real Indigenous peoples and instead more about those who create the (mis)renderings, we will look to texts authored by both Native and non-Native people, tribally enrolled and urban mixedbloods, friends and allies, academics and artists alike. Various types of writing assignments will guide us to think more deeply about our relationship to contemporary Native Americans and the responsibilities that accompany that knowledge and affiliation.

AMST 101.08 TR 3:10-4:25pm Molly McGlennen

### **Cognitive Science 110a 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.  
COGS 110.01 TR 7:00-9:00pm Kenneth Livingston

### **Education 162a 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.  
EDUC 162.01 WF 1:30-2:45pm Jaime Del Razo

### **English 101a British Literature from *Beowulf* to Shakespeare**

Texts may include *Beowulf*, *Pearl*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and authors may include Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare.  
ENGL 101.01 MW 9:00-10:15am Mark Amodio

### **English 101a 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 will investigate these and other questions. Authors will 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.  
ENGL 101.02 TR 10:30-11:45am Robert DeMaria

### **English 101a Reading and Writing About Poetry**

One of the most important lessons poetry teaches us is that language can do more than just explain things. Language can cast spells, perform ceremonies, make music; it can establish lines of communication with the dead, the divine and the nonhuman. Our work in this course is to tune into the many registers in which lyrical language can mean. To do so we will need to cultivate two different reading faculties: first, the intuitive skill of responding to poetic language, and feeling with it; and second, the critical skill of identifying and analyzing poetic devices and forms. Our goal is not to become perfect readers of poetry—after all, the best poems pull you in but also withhold, inviting you to pursue ambiguities and let their richness proliferate. We will

push back against the tired idea that poetry is “inaccessible,” re-training ourselves to see all the ways in which obscurity can be productive.

This course satisfies the college requirement for the First-year Writing Seminar, and is therefore reading- and writing-intensive. Over the course of the semester we will read and discuss a great deal of poetry in English (and some in translation), from the Early Modern period up until our current moment; we will contextualize a range of poetic forms within literary history, from the sonnet sequence to contemporary free verse poetics; we will memorize and recite poems for each other; and we will write thoughtfully and often.

ENGL 101.03 TR 12:00-1:15pm Katie Gemmill

### **English 101a Sounds American**

This is a course about the pop musical imagination, or what new possibilities, a catchy song, a groundbreaking album, or a brilliant artist compels us to envision. We'll approach this question thematically (rather than historically) and engage a range of texts—songs and albums; fiction and poetry; essays and memoirs; cultural histories and academic monographs; music videos and cultural theory—that bring the vast terrain that is the American soundscape into focus. Our considerations will draw from the perspective of the listener, the fan, the critic, from the Jazz Age to the present. In other words, we will try and interrogate what it means to engage with music in the present day. How have portable devices or streaming services altered our relationship to music? How does pop music provide a surface upon which we debate questions of political identity, authenticity, and self-determination? What visions of independence or freedom emerge when we engage with pop culture seriously, and with scrutiny?

ENGL 101.04 MW 1:30-2:45pm Hua Hsu

### **English 101a Plague Literature**

“Show me a plague and I'll show you the world,” wrote the AIDS activist Larry Kramer. This course looks at the literature of plagues from the early Greeks through the medieval and renaissance periods up to the present. While the COVID-19 crisis is the backdrop for our study, we will look at how other times and other cultures dealt with the recurrent phenomenon of world plagues, whether reporting on actual ones or imagining future occurrences. We will also have occasion to write about our own experiences of the current coronavirus pandemic. Works to be considered include: Homer, *The Iliad*; Thucydides, “The Plague of Athens”; Geoffrey Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Tale”; Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*; Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*; Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*; Edgar Allan Poe, “The Masque of the Red Death”; Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*; Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*.

ENGL 101.5 TR 1:30-2:45pm Paul Kane

### **English 101a 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, James Baldwin on his father’s death and race riots, Jorge Luis Borges on his “modest

blindness,” Susan Sontag looking at photographs, Joan Didion bidding goodbye to New York, Adrienne Rich recalling the strands that make up her identity. Also, Geoff Dyer on sex and hotels, Lydia Davis on “Foucault and pencil,” David Shields on the lyric essay, Jenny Boully on the body, Eliot Weinberger on what he heard about Iraq, and David Foster Wallace on anything. We will write brief essays (one to two pages) for each class and two longer essays (about eight pages in length).

ENGL 101.06 TR 3:10-4:25pm Amitava Kumar

### **English 101a Deception: Some Truths About Lies**

Narratives told by someone who can't be trusted invite readers to explore the ambiguous border between truths and lies. An author's perceptions may differ from those of the first-person narrator—the “I”—who tells the story, and that discrepancy opens up intriguing psychological space. “Good readers read the lines, better readers read the spaces,” the novelist John Barth has written. This section of English 101 will analyze both words and spaces—both what is said and what is unspoken or unspeakable. We'll investigate a rogues' gallery of unreliable narrators who bring varying degrees of mendacity, self-aggrandizement, and self-deception to the stories they tell. Then, from both literary and neuroscience perspectives, we'll think about memory, the mind, and the brain. We'll ask: Are memories always fallible? Are they ever-evolving stories we tell ourselves? Is remembering an act of creation rather than straightforward retrieval of the past? Are we all unreliable narrators? Authors may include Alison Bechdel, James Baldwin, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, Lydia Davis, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Ralph Ellison, Kazuo Ishiguro, Jamaica Kincaid, Tim O'Brien, Michael Ondaatje, George Orwell, Oliver Sacks, George Saunders, Charles Simic, Zadie Smith, and Oscar Wilde. Students will write both analytical and imaginative responses to the texts.

ENGL 101.07 TR 1:30-2:45pm M Mark

### **English 101a Sending Smoke Signals: Representations & Realities of Contemporary Native American Life**

(Same as AMST 101) How do films such as Sherman Alexie's *Smoke Signals* speak back to, critique, or wholly ignore films like *Dances With Wolves*, *Avatar*, or Disney's *Pocahontas*? How do Navajo poets like Esther Belin, Luci Tapahonso, or Orlando White engage similar critiques of twentieth-century translators of Native life and culture like John Neihardt or Theodora Kroeber? How does the work of Indigenous artists like James Luna, Rebecca Belmore, or George Longfish fly in the face of stereotypes of the stoic noble or fierce savage Indian? Interrogating depictions of Native American life through the use of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, periodicals, film, art, and performance, we will use the study and practice of writing to explore a segment of North America which is commonly misunderstood by non-Indigenous people. Because this misrepresented and misconstrued imagining of Native Americans says nothing about real Indigenous peoples and instead more about those who create the (mis)renderings, we will look to texts authored by both Native and non-Native people, tribally enrolled and urban mixedbloods, friends and allies, academics and artists alike. Various types of writing assignments will guide us to think more deeply about our relationship to contemporary Native Americans and the responsibilities that accompany that knowledge and affiliation.

ENGL 1010.08 TR 3:10-4:25pm Molly McGlennen

### **English 101a The Story of a Text: How Did Christianity Happen?**

In the years after Jesus' execution, his followers, mostly in Asia Minor, the Middle East and North Africa, produced dozens if not hundreds of documents in an attempt to come to terms with the exhilarating strangeness of his teachings. These took the form of gospels, letters, visions and other tracts. Extending roughly from the time of Paul's letters, circa 50-64 CE (the earliest extant Christian literature), through Athanasius' promulgation, in 367 CE, of a group of twenty-seven texts that would eventually become known as the New Testament, this course focuses on a tumultuous three centuries in which early Christians struggled to establish a set of orthodox beliefs against a bewildering and fecund array of counter-beliefs. In addition to a representative sample of the canonical gospels and Paul's letters (both authentic and forged), the course explores a range of other texts that did not, in the end, merit inclusion in the New Testament (though some came close). Among these are *The Didache*, *The Coptic Gospel of Thomas*, *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Mary*, *The Secret Book of John*, *The Proto-Gospel of James*, *The Apocalypse of Peter*, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, and *The Letter of Barnabas*. Particular attention is paid to Ebionite (pro-Jewish) and Marcionite (anti-Jewish) Christianities, as well as the various strands of Gnosticism.

ENGL 101.09 MW 10:30-11:45am Paul Russell

### **English 101a The Ends of Black Autobiography**

Autobiographical writing has been and remains a preeminent mode of African American expression. It was one of the first intellectual gestures that the formerly enslaved made when they gained literacy. It has fed music practices like the blues and hip-hop. It also may have created the circumstances by which the US could elect its first black president. Over the last three centuries, blacks have used this mode to insinuate themselves into literary modernity and register the often unacknowledged dynamism of their emotional and intellectual lives. This course will explore the aesthetics of black autobiographical narrative--its codes, tropes, and investments--from its beginnings in the eighteenth century to its most present iterations. If black autobiographical writing involves not only telling a story about a black subject, but also proffering a certain version of black life to its reading audiences, it is important to ascertain the nature of the cultural work that these stories (seek to) accomplish. Among the artists featured in this Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, W.E.B. Dubois, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Gloria Naylor, Barack Obama, Jasmyn Ward, Chris Rock, Oprah Winfrey, and MK Asante.

ENGL 101.10 MW 10:30-11:45am Tyrone Simpson

### **English 101a Jane Eyres**

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. Published pseudonymously in 1847, the novel was a literary sensation as well as a bestseller, even though Brontë's rebellious heroine upended nineteenth-century notions of propriety and femininity. While popular in its day, *Jane Eyre* has also had a hypnotic hold on subsequent generations of writers, who have 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 will explore *Jane Eyre*'s complicated relationship with its literary descendants and ask fundamental

questions about literary influence, canon formation, narration, and women's writing. In addition to *Jane Eyre*, readings may include Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. We will also screen different film adaptations of *Jane Eyre* in addition to Hitchcock's *Rebecca*.

ENGL 101.11 MWF 10:30-11:20am Susan Zlotnick

### **English 101a Speculative Fiction**

Speculative fiction names a genre that has been imagined variously, the term originating to describe a particular type of science fiction centered around fundamental human concerns and now understood to encompass several genres including horror, science fiction, fantasy, post-apocalyptic fiction, revisionist historical fiction, and other "non-mimetic" narrative forms. This course considers how stories refusing conformity to normative assumptions of what reality is and how reality works interrogate social, cultural, empirical, and political orders; open up affective and epistemological fields; reinterpret boundaries between life and death, animal and human, the significant and the marginal; instantiate philosophies of perception, time, and experience; and sharpen the utopian horizon. We will think about how the genre reimagines the monstrous, the ideal, the inevitable, the ineffable, and the possible. Finally, we will ask the extent to which all representational logics might be said to operate in the realm of the speculative and to what extent language itself, as a time-traveling ghost of the author's mind, is a grammar of the speculative.

ENGL 101.12 MW 1:30-2:45pm Tracy O'Neill

### **English 101a Allegories of the Self**

This course will provide 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 will introduce 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 will also explore the idiom as a prototype for the modern science of psychology. This course will thus serve 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.

ENGL 101.13 MR 3:10-4:25pm Thomas Hill

### **English 101a Epidemic and Order: The Social Components and Consequences of Disease**

Epidemics and their attendant fears of contagion remind us of the potential toxicity of social contact as well as our own physical limitations in the face of restrictions on movement. As we'll see in this course, these impositions can disrupt—and even entirely rupture—established social

orders. From medieval lepers to COVID-19 sufferers, epidemics can spread prejudice, and yet they can also open opportunities to see the world in new and generative ways. From 1347 to 1351, the Black Death kills 40 – 60% of the population of England, contributing to later uprisings against established social stations, and a clerk named Geoffrey Chaucer writes one of the most popular set of tales of the English Middle Ages: a class satire called *The Canterbury Tales*. In the 18th century, the expanding British Empire sends an ambassador to Turkey where his wife, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, learns about smallpox inoculation. She goes on to fiercely advocate for the practice in England and writes poetry about the female experience of the disease. This course will carefully situate these and other literary works about epidemics within their historical and social contexts, asking how scientific ideas inform social products (including literature) and vice versa.

ENGL 101.14 TR 9:00-10:15am Erin Sweany

### **French and Francophone 170a Down to Earth: An Ecocritical Venture.**

“To be down to earth” is a metaphorical expression that upholds the environmental values of moderation, practicality and acceptance of others as equals. Its opposite, “to act high and mighty,” condemns excess, waste and unjustified assertions of superiority. In this discussion-based course, we focus on metaphor to explore literature and film in search of environmental values. In what ways do literary or cinematic metaphors challenge or reinforce various dualisms – such as “civilized/savage,” “light/dark” and “humanity/animality” – that structure hierarchical thinking? What are the implicit or explicit connections between such thinking and a text’s representations of human and non-human nature? Students learn to engage strategies for using writing to analyze and develop their ideas, and to engage materials relevant to their arguments. Coursework builds toward crafting a coherent essay that logically develops an original claim.

FFS 170.01 MW 1:30-2:45pm Kathleen Hart

### **Greek and Roman Studies 103a Homer’s *Iliad* in Modern Adaptations**

Homer’s *Iliad*, dating from over 2 millennia ago, continues to inspire poets, playwrights and novelists working today. In this class we study contemporary responses to the poem, all of them composed in English within the past five to ten years. The adaptations include poetry, drama and novelistic responses. Among the questions we consider are: Why does the poem, which offers an account of the last year of the mythological war between the Greeks and the Trojans, continue to capture our imagination? What is it about our current cultural moment that has drawn so many artists to the ancient poem? How can we consider the role that the Homer’s poem plays in these modern works while also taking these modern receptions seriously on their own terms? After a close reading of the *Iliad*, among the modern adaptations we consider are Simon Armitage’s *The Story of the Iliad* (2015), Madeline Miller’s *The Song of Achilles* (2012), David Malouf’s *Ransom* (2011) and Alice Oswald’s *Memorial* (2013).

GRST 103.01 TR 12:00-1:15pm Rachel Friedman

### **History 160a American Moments: Rediscovering U.S. History**

This is not your parents’—or your high school teacher’s—American history course. No textbook:

Instead we read memoirs, novels, newspaper articles, letters, speeches, photographs, and films composed by a colorful, diverse cast of characters—famous and forgotten, slaves and masters, workers and bosses. No survey: Instead we pause to look at several illuminating “moments” from the colonial era through the Civil War to civil rights and the Cold War. Traveling from the Great Awakening to the “awakening” that was the 1960s, from an anticolonial rebellion that Americans won (1776) to another that they lost (Vietnam), the course challenges assumptions about America’s past—and perhaps also a few about America’s present and future.

HIST 160.01 TR 9:00-10:15am James Merrell

### **History 174a 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.

HIST 174.01 TR 12:00-1:15pm Joshua Schreier

### **History 175a Mandela: Race, Resistance and Renaissance in South Africa**

(Same as AFRS 175) This course critically explores the history and politics of South Africa in the twentieth century through the prism of the life, politics, and experiences of one of its most iconic figures, Nelson Mandela. After almost three decades of incarceration for resisting Apartheid, Mandela became the first democratically elected president of a free South Africa in 1994. It was an inspirational moment in the global movement and the internal struggle to dismantle Apartheid and to transform South Africa into a democratic, non-racial, and just society. Using Mandela’s autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, as our point of departure, the course discusses some of the complex ideas, people, and developments that shaped South Africa and Mandela’s life in the twentieth century, including: indigenous culture, religion, and institutions; colonialism, race, and ethnicity; nationalism, mass resistance, and freedom; and human rights, social justice, and post-conflict reconstruction.

HIST 175.01 MW 12:00-1:15pm Ismail Rashid

### **History 178a The Global Cold War**

The Cold War was a political, ideological, military, and social conflict that engulfed the major powers—the United States, Soviet Union, and China—from 1945 until 1989. Yet it also involved peoples and states throughout the global south. This course examines the history of the Cold War for the purpose of illuminating powerful military, political, economic, social, and ideological dynamics that continue to shape global power.

HIST 178.01 MW 1:30pm-02:45pm Robert Brigham

### **Philosophy 104a Tragedy and Philosophy: Ancient and Modern Perspectives**

Since Greek antiquity, philosophers have puzzled over the meaning, value, and purpose of tragedy. This course will trace their conversation from ancient Athens (Plato and Aristotle) to German Romanticism (Schopenhauer and Nietzsche) to the present (Stanley Cavell and

Martha Nussbaum). Along the way we study several plays that have inspired the philosophical imagination, including works by Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare, and Edward Albee. Students learn to write carefully argued analyses of challenging texts, and to reflect on broader issues of literary interpretation, canonization and genre, and the ethical significance of art. If appropriate, the class will attend a theatrical performance, a film screening, or a live broadcast of the Metropolitan Opera.

PHIL 104.01 TR 1:30-2:45pm Christopher Raymond

### **Psychological Science 108a Reading and Writing in Psychological Science**

This first-year writing seminar is designed to develop critical reading skills across a range of work in Psychological Science and to practice different kinds of writing. Open only to first year students, this course satisfies the college requirement for a First-Year Writing Seminar. The specific topics of these first-year writing seminars in Psychological Science vary, and despite its variety of topics, this course may not be repeated for credit.

Topic for 2020/21a: *Growing Up Poor in America*. Poverty can have profound effects on the psychological development of children. In this course, we explore scientific and anecdotal accounts of those effects. Specific topics we explore include stress, relationships, racism and resilience. Readings include articles on the science of child development, including brain development, as well as memoirs and accounts of children's experiences. Writing focuses on reporting scientific findings, and on relating that science to everyday life. Nick de Leeuw.

Topic for 2020/21b: *The Art and Science of Human Resilience*. This first-year writing seminar will consider artistic expressions of human resilience in poetry, song, first-person narratives, fiction, and non-fiction. We consider these works together with psychological science research that focuses on some of the same themes of resilience. These themes may include resilient responses to adversity, recovery from illness or impairment, post-traumatic growth, successful aging, as well as the nurturance of resilience through green spaces, mindfulness practices, interpersonal and community relationships, artistic productivity, and social activism.

PSYC 108.01 TR 10:30-11:45am Sue Trumbetta

### **Religion 183a Christian Theology and the Body**

This introduction focuses on the relationship between spirituality and embodiment in Christian thought, ritual, and ethics. Religion 280 provides an overview of the historical development of Christianity while integrating analyses of contemporary communities, literatures, and practices. The main question that guides the class is how Christians in different times and places experience the gap between spirit and flesh. How does this binary apply to notions of the human being, the interpretation of divine revelation, and political movements? Over the course of the semester, students examine Christian concepts of the relationship between body and spirit for the ways in which they have been used to legitimate as well as subvert social hierarchies and forge new communities.

RELI 183.01 TR 10:30am-11:45am Klaus Yoder

### **Russian Studies 171a 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.

RUSS 171.01 TR 12:00am-1:15pm Charles Arndt III

### **Sociology 112a 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 the climate change.

SOCI 112.02 MW 12:00am-1:15pm Pinar Batur

## **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 [silp.vassar.edu](http://silp.vassar.edu), contact Lioba Gerhardt [ligerhardi@vassar.edu](mailto:ligerhardi@vassar.edu)). Some professors will allow first-year students to enroll in 200 level

(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 <https://africanastudies.vassar.edu> 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; and to integrate studio art with education certification. 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 100-level courses, Introduction to American Studies (American Studies 100), 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 the documentary impulse of the 1930s, on the civil rights movement, on subculture and resistance, on the art and thought of the 1980s, and on emerging forms of print, digital, and audio journalism. Students exploring the major are encouraged to take the required seminar, America in the World (American Studies 250) during their sophomore year. Students with questions about the program or its courses should feel free to email the Program Director, Molly McGlennen, at [momcglennen@vassar.edu](mailto:momcglennen@vassar.edu), or the program’s Administrative Assistant, Melissa McAlley, at [mmcalley@vassar.edu](mailto:mmcalley@vassar.edu).

For more information, please visit <https://americanstudies.vassar.edu>.

## Anthropology

Anthropology is the study of humanity, in all its complexity, throughout the world. It offers detailed accounts of human origins, evolution, history, politics, expressive communication and performance (such as art, music, and ritual practices) and sociocultural diversity. Anthropologists engage in ethnographic, archival, biological, archaeological, and linguistic research that focuses on both individual and collective experiences; they also participate in an open and critical exchange with the humanities and the social, physical, and biological sciences.

A central concern of anthropologists is the application of knowledge to the solution of human problems. Historically, anthropologists in the United States have been trained in one of four subdisciplines: sociocultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology, biological/physical anthropology, and archaeology.

Anthropologists often integrate perspectives drawn from these subfields into their research, teaching, and professional lives. Courses available to first-year students include Cultural Anthropology (Anthropology 140), which is required of all majors, The Human Animal: Intro to Biological Anthropology (Anthropology 120), Archaeology: Lessons From the Past (Anthropology 130), and Linguistics and Anthropology (Anthropology 150).

Majors will also need to take a course in anthropological theory, obtain some field experience, and become familiar with at least two of the other subdisciplines and two cultural regions. Beyond this, students follow their own interests and inclinations with the assistance of departmental faculty.

For more information, please visit <https://anthropology.vassar.edu> or email [makaplan@vassar.edu](mailto:makaplan@vassar.edu) and/or [anthropology@vassar.edu](mailto:anthropology@vassar.edu).

## Art

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 classes in drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, printmaking, color, computer animation, video, and architectural design are available to studio majors, correlates, and nonmajors. The yearlong introductory course, Drawing I (Art 102-103), is open to first-year

students. This course, suited to students with a range of drawing experience from beginners to those with extensive drawing experience, is the pre- or corequisite for the intermediate studio courses. Color (Art 108) is also open to first-year students. Studio courses meet four hours per week for one unit of credit. As part of their instruction, all students receive individual criticism. Intermediate and advanced architectural drawing and design classes are also offered, with prerequisites that are listed in the catalogue. Note that there is a lab fee for all studio courses; see the catalogue for details. Students enrolled in studio courses who are receiving financial aid may apply to the Office of Financial Aid for a stipend to offset this fee.

For more information, please visit <https://art.vassar.edu>.

## 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 Encounters in Modern East Asia (History 122), Religions of Asia (Religion 152), and Social Change in South Korean Film (Sociology 111).

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, and Japanese, with Hindi, Korean, 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 <https://asianstudies.vassar.edu> or email Professor Christopher Bjork, director of Asian Studies, at [chbjork@vassar.edu](mailto:chbjork@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, law, 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 catalogue.

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 and 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 may choose to place out of Biology 107 and Biology 108. Students with an International Baccalaureate (IB) Biology HL exam score of 6 or 7 also may choose to place out of Biology 107 and Biology 108. Students must confirm their AP or IB Biology credit with the Dean of Studies Office. Students who place out of both Biology 107 and 108 must take Chemistry 125 before enrolling in 200-level biology courses.

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 in your first 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 (<https://biology.vassar.edu/>), or contact the Biology Department chair, Meg Ronsheim (845-437-7441, [maronsheim@vassar.edu](mailto:maronsheim@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 through introductory studies in biology, chemistry, to advanced courses in biology and chemistry, integrative courses in biochemistry, and an intensive research experience in the senior year.

Students should feel free to contact the program director Jennifer Kennell ([jekennell@vassar.edu](mailto:jekennell@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.

First-year students considering a biochemistry major are strongly advised to enroll in the following courses at some point in their first-year:

- Introductory Biology 107 and 108 are required for the major and must be taken in numerical order. Both courses are offered both semesters. For information on these courses and about placing out of BIOL 107 and 108 with AP or IB credit, see the section on “Biology”.
- 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.
- 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’s website at (<https://biochemistry.vassar.edu>) or email the program director Jennifer Kennell ([jekennell@vassar.edu](mailto:jekennell@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 or an industrial setting.

There are two chemistry courses that can be taken during the first year. 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. Chemical topics covered include units, uncertainty, significant figures, dimensional analysis, estimation, atomic theory and symbols, the periodic table, chemical nomenclature, stoichiometry, solution chemistry including an introduction to acids and bases, solubility and precipitation, and oxidation-reduction chemistry, gases, and thermochemistry. Students may take this course so as 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. The material covered in Chemistry 125 includes chemical reactions, stoichiometry, atomic and molecular structure, and general chemical physics, emphasizing the fundamental aspects of and connections between equilibria, electrochemistry, thermodynamics, and kinetics. 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.

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.

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 are 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.

For more information, please visit <https://chemistry.vassar.edu> 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. The department provides five 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 upon the results of the placement test. 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 the 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 <https://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 the mind? Is a mind just a brain? What endows your mind with the property of being conscious? How does your mind allow you to extract music from sound waves, relish the taste of chocolate, daydream, feel happy and sad, or reach for your cup when you want a sip of coffee? How similar is your mind to the minds of other people? Do you have to be a human being to have a mind? Could other entities have minds so long as they were built the right way? Does your computer have a mind? These are the kinds of questions that cognitive scientists want to address.

Introduction to Cognitive Science (Cognitive Science 100), which is required for the major but open to all students, is the entrance into the department. The course asks what we mean by mind and who or what has a mind. We examine computer models of mind and the relationship between mind and brain. The course also focuses on what enables any agent—from simple animal to human to smart machine—to act intelligently. We especially focus on perception and action, memory, decision making, language, and consciousness. We also explore the degree to which cognition requires and is influenced by having a body situated in a particular context. Multiple sections of the course are offered each year, and first-year students interested in cognitive science are encouraged to consider taking one. This course also serves as the prerequisite for all intermediate-level courses in cognitive science.

Cognitive science is a broadly multidisciplinary field that has emerged at the intersection of a number of older disciplines, such as philosophy, computer science, psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, linguistics, biology, and mathematics. The department offers a core set of courses that teach students how to think in an integrative fashion, but it also requires that students find applications of these ideas in other areas of the curriculum outside of cognitive science.

Courses in many divisions of the curriculum, from the arts to the sciences, may count toward the major if they help to develop the skills needed to complete the required senior thesis. The interested student should consult the department web pages or meet with a member of the faculty to discuss how these courses might be selected.

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. Opportunities are available for students to obtain summer positions working on faculty research projects at Vassar and at other schools.

For more information about these and about the major, please consult the catalogue or visit <https://cogsci.vassar.edu>. You may also call the department office at (845) 437-7368.

## College Course

The College Course Program was established to ensure that students can have direct exposure in their years at Vassar to some important expressions of the human spirit in a context that is both multidisciplinary and integrative. The aim of a College Course is to study important cultures, themes, or human activities in a manner that gives the student experience in interpreting evidence from the standpoint of different fields. The courses relate this material and these interpretations to other material and interpretations from other fields in order to unite the results of this study into a coherent overall framework. The interpretations are expected to be both appreciative and critical, and the artifacts will come from different times, places, and cultures.

First-year students are encouraged to check the catalogue for descriptions of offerings in the College Course Program.

## Computer Science

The Computer Science Department places computer science at the core of a modern liberal arts education, offering students the opportunity to engage with the field in a variety of ways. The introductory courses are designed for non-majors, majors, and correlates with no prerequisites for students interested in taking a first course in computer science or data science. Core foundational courses at the 200-level prepare students for further study at the 300-level in areas such as artificial intelligence, bioinformatics, computational linguistics, graphics and animation, systems, networks, and security. The department provides excellent preparation for a career in computer science, as well as graduate studies in the area.

Computer Science 101, the entry-level course in computer science, introduces computing concepts through functional programming and structural recursion. After completing Computer Science 101, a student may take Computer Science 102 and Computer Science 145 in either order, or simultaneously. These three foundational courses are strongly recommended for science majors. For students who want to complement other majors with substantial work in computer science, the department offers a correlate in computer science consisting of six courses with different emphases.

The department provides all necessary computing equipment, including laboratories containing workstations running the Linux operating system, available 24x7 to all students taking courses in the department. Ongoing research projects in several areas of the field offer students the opportunity to work with faculty both during the academic year and over the summer.

For more information, please visit <https://computerscience.vassar.edu>, <https://www.cs.vassar.edu> or email [csdept@vassar.edu](mailto:csdept@vassar.edu).

## Dance

Dance is an elective academic course of study with three full time faculty and one part-time faculty, a resident lighting designer/technical director, and three adjunct artists/accompanists. Located in Kenyon Hall, the Dance Department's facilities include four dance studios and the Frances Daly Fergusson Dance Theater, which seats 242. All the dance floors are designed specifically to serve the needs of the dance program.

Vassar's primary student dance performance group, Vassar Repertory Dance Theatre (VRDT), holds an annual audition on the first Saturday of the fall semester. VRDT performs throughout the year and may be taken for academic credit. It is a yearlong commitment. The repertoire includes existing works in the jazz, modern dance, and classical ballet styles as well as new creations by guest choreographers, faculty, and students.

The technique courses offered are beginner through advanced modern dance technique, beginner through four levels of intermediate classical ballet technique including pointe and adagio when suitable, beginner to intermediate jazz, and intermediate Graham technique and repertory. In addition to the technique courses, the department offers courses in choreography, improvisation, and movement analysis. These are open to all students. The choreography students and the independent study students often perform in December and April.

Details on all courses may be found in the catalogue. For placement or special permission signatures, consult the appropriate individual faculty member. For the VRDT audition date in the fall, performance dates for the year, master class offerings, and other information, call the Dance Office at 845-437-7470 or visit our website at <https://dance.vassar.edu>.

## Drama

Drama majors study all aspects of theater. We strongly believe that theory and practice are inseparable. Complex learning, analytical and critical thinking, and collaborative, embodied

practice as they are taught in the classroom are tested in a laboratory production environment. The Drama Department curriculum and its Experimental Theater work in tandem. 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 and/or participating in Drama 200 (Production).

First-year students planning to continue the study of drama beyond their first year should note that Drama 102 (Introduction to Theater-Making) and Drama 103 (Introduction to Stagecraft) are prerequisites for all 200-level work in drama. Productions undertaken by the department are curricular in nature.

The department undertakes faculty directed projects and a number of senior projects, both emphasizing the collaborative nature of theatrical production. Occasionally the department hires guest artists to create specific projects with our students. Our productions are presented in the Vogelstein Center for Drama and Film or in the Hallie Flanagan Powerhouse Theater.

For more information, please visit <https://drama.vassar.edu> 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 living beings on Earth. It also 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 which we view as critical for anyone interested in environmentalism.

As a visual science, we regularly go on [field trips](#) to observe geologic phenomena outdoors. Frequently we sponsor week-long field trips to understand recent and past geologic events such as tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, and floods. For example, in recent years, Earth science students have studied with our earth science faculty at Big Bend National Park, Death Valley, Yellowstone, Iceland and Italy.

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 Earth, Environment, and Humanity (Earth Science 151), which fulfills the college's quantitative analysis requirement. Other introductory courses include Oceanography, Field Geology of the Hudson Valley, Volcanoes and Civilization, and a first-year writing seminar about the Anthropocene and environmental justice.

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; 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, atmospheric deposition of metals in Catskill Mountain bogs, and low-temperature transformation of rocks in geothermal wells. Earth science majors have gone on to careers in environmental law, environmental health and medicine, mapping, museum design, academia, science writing, renewable energy research, 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 catalogue. Interested students are also encouraged to email the chair of the Department of Earth Science and Geography, Jill Schneiderman, [schneiderman@vassar.edu](mailto:schneiderman@vassar.edu), and to visit <https://earthscienceandgeography.vassar.edu>.

## **Earth Science and Society**

The Earth Science and Society major combines courses from Earth Science and Geography to provide a focus on the relationships between Earth processes and human societies. 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 the spatial distribution of physical and human phenomena and how human societies are shaped by, and also change, the natural world.

First-year students interested in exploring the Earth Science and Society major should take Earth, Environment, and Humanity (Earth Science 151) and Global Geography: People, Places, and Regions (Geography 102). Students majoring in Earth Science and Society take roughly half their major sequence in earth science and half in geography. For further information, see <https://earthscienceandgeography.vassar.edu>.

## **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 2020/21 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 2020/21 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 second semester provided they have satisfied the prerequisite requirements. Economics 209 is not open to members of the class of 2024.

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 <https://economics.vassar.edu/>.

## 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 an art—that is, 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 writing, 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. Those who have taken English 101 in the fall semester and who wish to continue in English are advised to elect English 170 in the spring of the first year. Students may not elect both English 101 and English 170 in the same semester, nor take either course twice.

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 101 or English 170 in the fall semester. AP and IB students may also seek placement in a 200-level course in the fall semester. 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. No student scoring lower than 4 will be eligible for placement in English 170 or a 200-level course in their first term at Vassar.

The department's 200-level creative writing classes are not open to first-year students, even those with a 4 or 5 on the AP examination. Occasionally, the department offers a unit of creative writing for first-years. English 101 does allow for creative writing though it emphasizes expository writing.

For detailed descriptions of the English 101 courses offered this year, please see the section of this handbook on "First-Year Writing Seminars."

For more information about all the courses offered by the Department of English, please visit <https://english.vassar.edu>.

## **Environmental Studies**

Vassar's multidisciplinary program in Environmental Studies involves the natural sciences and social sciences as well as the arts and humanities. Approximately 40 professors from virtually every department on campus participate in the program. Students choose a disciplinary concentration, which can be in any department (from biology to art), and view environmental issues through the perspective of that discipline. They also take multidisciplinary courses on environmental issues offered by the program itself. These courses are often team-taught by professors from two different disciplines. The special studies courses for 2020/21 include Acoustic Ecology (Environmental Studies 260) and Terroir: The Art and Science of "Tasting" the Earth (Environmental Studies 270). First-year students considering a major in environmental studies are encouraged to take Essentials of Environmental Sciences (Environmental Studies 124) and/or Environmentalisms in Perspective (Environmental Studies 125). Please look at the program website for a list titled "Courses to Consider" of other environmentally relevant courses.

Vassar's location in the Hudson River Valley, one of the world's great watersheds, and its proximity to New York City position students well for both rural and urban ecology study. The program concerns itself both with traditional "green" issues such as conservation and sustainability and with environmental issues of social justice. Graduates from the Environmental Studies Program go on to pursue graduate education in areas such as urban ecology, environmental policy, public health, environmental law, and environmental management. Others go on to a wide variety of careers in which a multidisciplinary perspective is valuable, including environmental education, environmental consulting, sustainable agriculture, green architecture, marine conservation, and environmental journalism.

For further information, please visit <https://environmentalstudies.vassar.edu>.

## Film

The film major emphasizes the study of narrative, documentary, and avant-garde films. The concentration includes a range of courses in international film, American film, film history and theory, film and video 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 widen their exposure to films of all countries, styles, and time periods.

Film 175: Introduction to Screen Arts, is currently the only course available for first-year students and is offered every spring semester. Sophomores must plan to take Film 209: World Cinema (either in the fall or spring semester). 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. Intensive workshop courses in film and video production are offered to students during their junior and senior years at the college. 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; a studio equipped with a flexible set and a lighting grid; a room devoted to sound recording containing a whisper booth; 2 editing suites; and a high tech multimedia laboratory.

First-year students interested in work/study positions 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).

For more information, please visit <https://film.vassar.edu>.

## 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. Recent graduates now 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, curation, and the art world.

Except for our First-Year Writing Seminar (FFS 180), all courses are conducted in French. Only students who have never studied French are permitted to enroll in the yearlong FFS 105-106, usually followed by FFS 205. All other students should take the online placement exam located at <https://french.vassar.edu/students/#g1q2> before pre-registering. Use the password "chicagohall" to take the test. Students should then consult with FFS faculty at the departmental advising session during orientation. Students who have taken two years of French in high school normally elect FFS 205. Students who have taken one or two years of French and who do not place into 205, may elect FFS 109 to complete the equivalent of 105-106. Those who have taken three years of French in high school normally elect French 206. Students who have taken four years of French in high school normally elect FFS 210 before moving on to FFS 212 or upper 200-level courses.

Since high school experiences vary, taking the online placement exam and 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 should therefore not hesitate to consult with department faculty during the add/drop period.

Students are encouraged to avail themselves of all the opportunities to speak and hear French in informal situations (bi-monthly Café-conversation, French Club, French films, the French book club, conversation with the language fellows and academic interns, or watching French and Francophone news via the Internet). Two native speakers—the language fellows—are in residence during the entire academic year. Additionally, we employ academic interns and run a language "Atelier" to help students with their work.

There are also employment opportunities which allow students to use their language skills as research assistants, drill instructors, and administrative assistants. Please see the Chair 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 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, go to <http://en.vwpp.org>.

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, or Women's Studies. Others combine FFS with a departmental concentration such as 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 a wide variety of community-engaged learning possibilities and several innovative "Intensives."

For more information, including meeting the College language requirement, please visit <https://french.vassar.edu> or contact the FFS Academic 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 approach allows us to anchor general explanatory frameworks in the real communities and environments in which they play out. How does climate affect food production? How does uneven distribution of power produce conflict across international borders? How do planners design equitable and sustainable cities? Students learn a variety of analytical and research skills to answer questions like these. We 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, environmental consulting, environmental agencies, community development, law, and many other fields. Among the specific skills you will learn in geography classes are GIS (geographic information systems); written and verbal expression; critical reading of texts, maps, and urban landscapes; and geographic research methods.

Interested first-year students should take Geography 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.

Following Geography 102, students may choose from a variety of 200-level courses, such as Population, Environment, and Sustainable Development (Geography 266), Urban Geography: Space, Place, Environment (Geography 250), GIS (Geography 224), or Economic Geography (Geography 276). To major in Geography, students take 11 units, including Global Geography, a methods course, and three units at the 300 level. A number of courses in Earth science also count toward the major.

For further information, please visit <https://earthscienceandgeography.vassar.edu>.

## Geography-Anthropology

Geography and anthropology share common interests in social and spatial structures, cultural and symbolic landscapes, and human-environmental relations. For students wishing to integrate the perspectives of both disciplines, from research methods in anthropology and ethnography to GIS analysis and political ecology, this interdepartmental concentration combines the perspectives of geography and anthropology in examining the cultural, ecological, and spatial relations of societies and the environmental systems in which they develop.

Students take courses in both geography and anthropology for this major. Interested first-year students should take Geography 102, Global Geography: Place-Making in the Modern World as well as an introductory (100-level) course in anthropology, such as Anthropology 100, Archeology; Anthropology 120, Human Origins; or Anthropology 140, Cultural Anthropology.

Requirements for a concentration include 11 units, with at least 5 units in each field. The 11 units include at least two introductory courses, at least 4 units at the 300 level, a methods course in both geography and anthropology, and Anthropological Theory.

For further information, see <https://earthscienceandgeography.vassar.edu>.

## 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, while Germany's history and culture continue to pose significant 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, contemporary identity, 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 German

Studies Department also offers study abroad opportunities through its close and long-standing association with the prestigious Berlin Consortium for German Studies.

During New Student Orientation, students can consult with faculty about the appropriate courses to take. First-year students who have never studied German should enroll in the year-long Beginning German (German 105-106) or Intensive Beginning German (German 109), a two-unit, one-semester course offered in the spring semester. Generally, students with less than two years of German in high school should enroll in German 105 or 109; 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 offers additional opportunities for practicing German through the weekly *Kaffeeklatsch*, film showings, and get-togethers with our German language fellow.

For more information, please visit <https://german.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.

The story of “classical” scholarship goes back to the Library of Alexandria in the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE. The project that the scholars of the library undertook was to collect, copy, and edit as many texts of Greek literature as they could find. The study of the Greeks and Romans still has, at its core, this act of preservation. But, like the Alexandrian scholars and perhaps more self-consciously, we acknowledge that we are also involved in an act of re-interpretation. Our goal is both to preserve the knowledge of ancient cultures but also to interpret that knowledge in the context of contemporary culture.

We bring to this project many different skills and many different methods. Again, at the heart of the enterprise are the philological skills that the Alexandrian scholars developed: the ability to look back at a “dead” language and imagine it in its living form so as to read texts as richly as possible. An ancient historian adds to this skill the ability to gather disparate kinds of fragmentary evidence, both literary and material, to reconstruct both the major national and international events that shaped these cultures as well as the day-to-day texture of life. In this they rely heavily on archaeologists who uncover the physical traces of the past and attempt to

establish a chronology and a function for these remains. Literary scholars not only find evidence in works of literature for the aesthetic principles that govern the creation of literary works of art, but also apply modern theoretical approaches that allow us to see literature as a reflection of social, political, and religious assumptions.

But in the end every student of Greek and Roman studies is using insights about the ancient world to enrich his or her understanding of our modern world. What classicists develop is an intense self-consciousness about the nature of their own assumptions, fashioned by the world in which they 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.

Students interested in learning Greek or Latin, or who have done so only briefly, should take Elementary Greek (Greek and Roman Studies 127, a one semester intensive course taught in the spring) or Elementary Latin (Greek and Roman Studies 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 in high school should consult with a member of the department, who may direct them to a higher-level course. Courses in English, for those interested in ancient societies, include the introductory courses, Then and Now: Reinterpreting Greece and Rome (Greek and Roman Studies 100), and Civilization in Question (Greek and Roman Studies 101). The department also regularly offers First-Year Writing Seminars. We also offer a wide variety of other courses in translation at all levels. Please consult the course catalogue for the most up-to-date listings; many 200 level courses do not have a prerequisite.

For more information, please visit <http://greekandromanstudies.vassar.edu> and on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Vassar-Classics-Greek-and-Roman-Studies-119734821509197>. You are also welcome to contact Rachel Friedman, Chair of the Greek and Roman Studies Department, at [rafriedman@vassar.edu](mailto:rafriedman@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-two years, Hispanic Studies 105-106; two-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. Additional guidance about appropriate placement will be available 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 206.

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 catalogue 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 <https://hispanicstudies.vassar.edu> or email [hispanicstudies@vassar.edu](mailto:hispanicstudies@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. Alternately, 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 in the front foyer of Swift Hall, just to the left of the stairway. 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 recently established 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, Lydia Murdoch. Her office is Swift Hall, Room 304. She is best reached by email ([lymurdoch@vassar.edu](mailto:lymurdoch@vassar.edu)) for an appointment or consultation.

For more information, please visit <https://history.vassar.edu>.

## Independent Program

The Independent Program exists to allow the study of a subject of interest to a student that can only be approached in a multidisciplinary way. The Program only allows students to pursue the major if Vassar does not already have a formalized departmental, interdepartmental or multidisciplinary program that allows for the proposed course of study.

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 <https://independentprogram.vassar.edu>.

## Interdepartmental Courses

Vassar students may train as required for state certification as an emergency medical technician by taking a yearlong EMT Training course (Interdepartmental 150-151) for 0.5 units of credit each semester. It is expected that the students who complete the training will serve on the Vassar EMT squad. See the Vassar catalogue for more details.

## 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.

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, 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.) This proposal is typically due at the end of October of the sophomore year, although many students end up declaring IS after the "due date."

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, Russia, Uganda, and South Africa.

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 <https://internationalstudies.vassar.edu>, 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 department, from introductory language instruction to advanced seminars, are taught in Italian. First-year students with no previous experience in Italian should take the yearlong Italian 105-106, which is an introduction to the language and culture of Italy through short stories and plays, opera and popular music, and film and popular culture. Skits and other student-centered activities integrate grammar and vocabulary study to promote practical communication in the classroom and beyond. All students with previous knowledge of Italian will be placed in the appropriate courses after an interview with the department chair. An oral and written exam may be used for advanced placement or to fulfill the Foreign Language Proficiency requirement.

To coordinate the different language activities, a native Italian language fellow will be in residence. Students are encouraged to attend extracurricular activities organized by the department and by the Italian Majors’ Committee, such as trips to the Metropolitan Opera House, the Italian Cinema Club, and cooking classes.

Italian majors and correlates are encouraged to spend a semester or a year 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. Typical correlate combinations include art history, studio art, drama, film, medieval and Renaissance studies, history, women’s studies, and international studies.

For more information, visit <https://italian.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 catalogue 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 catalogue; 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 <https://jewishstudies.vassar.edu>.

**Latin** (See Greek and Roman Studies)

## **Latin American and Latino/a Studies**

The Latin American and Latino/a Studies Program provides a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Latin America and the Latinx and Latino/a populations of the Americas. The program emphasizes knowledge of global politics, economies, histories, cultures, and nations as theorized, imagined, and practiced through Latin/Latino/a America. Participating faculty are drawn from the following departments: anthropology, economics, education, English, geography, Hispanic studies, history, 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. Good knowledge of Spanish or Portuguese is required for majors; deeper knowledge of the relevant language is recommended. An introductory course, Latin American and Latino/a Studies 105, and the Latin American and Latino/a Studies Senior Seminar (in previous years, 389 or 352) are both required, along with one course on Latin America before 1900, one in Latino/a or 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. Students are also encouraged to enroll in independent studies, fieldwork, or Intensives in Latin American and Latino/a Studies.

Latin American and Latino/a Studies correlates, who also should meet the language requirement outlined above, must complete six courses, including Latin American and Latino/a Studies 105, a pre-1900 course on Latin America, the Senior Seminar, and another Latin American and Latino/a 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 Conceptualizing Latin and Latino/a America (Latin American and Latino/a Studies 105), offered in the spring semester. This course offers a multidisciplinary exploration of the worlds of Latin and Latino/a America, 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 Latino/a worlds. Topics to be treated may include immigrant children and education, gender and development, the formation of 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 peace building, and/or questions of cultural citizenship. Prospective majors are strongly encouraged to take this course.

For more information, please visit <https://latinamericanstudies.vassar.edu/>

## **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 advising sessions.

First-year students who have taken a year of calculus in high school should enroll in one of the following depending on their particular background: Calculus IIA: Functions and Integration (Math 126, a six-week course), Calculus IIB: Sequences and Series (Math 127, a six-week course), or Multivariable Calculus (Math 220). Math 126 together with 127 will satisfy the quantitative analysis requirement, and these courses may be taken in either order. However, many students will need only Math 127 to progress to the 200-level. These students can fulfill their quantitative analysis requirement by enrolling in Math 220.

First-year students who have had little or no calculus in high school should enroll in Single Variable Calculus (Math 121), which begins with first principles. If such a student plans a major in the sciences or plans to take additional courses in mathematics, it is recommended that Math 121 be followed by Math 126 and 127 during their first year.

Here is some general advice for students wishing to preregister in a math or stats course:

Students who receive a 4 or 5 on the AP Calculus BC examination should elect Math 220. Students who earn a 3 or below on the BC examination will ordinarily take either Math 127 alone, or Math 126 and Math 127 but must discuss their placement with the department.

Students who receive a 4 or 5 on the AP Calculus AB examination are advised to elect Math 127. Students with a 3 or below on the AB examination are advised to enroll in Math 126 and Math 127. But students should confirm these placements by consulting with the department during the departmental advising sessions.

Students with a full year of calculus, through IB or in some other setting, may sign up for 126/127 or 220 in advance and consult with the department during orientation to be sure of the correct level of placement.

Students who receive a 4 or 5 on the AP Statistics examination are advised to elect Math 242 if they are interested in continuing their study of statistics. Students with a 3 or lower on the AP Statistics examination should elect Math 240 to continue statistics studies. Students interested in statistics who have not had any exposure to statistics should consider Math 141 or Math 240 after consultation with the department. A score of 4 or 5 on the AP Statistics examination together with another Statistics course in the department counts as a gateway requirement in the Statistics pathway.

Any student without AP credit in Calculus can still receive 1 unit of advanced placement credit by performing well enough on a written Calculus Credit Examination given by the department in early September. The time and place of the Calculus Credit Examination will be posted on the Mathematics Department bulletin board in Rockefeller Hall and announced in classes. 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.

Any of the following satisfies the pre-medical calculus requirement: Math 121/126/127, Math 126/127, Math 220. The department also offers Introduction to Statistical Reasoning (Math 141) and Introduction to Statistics (Math 240), either one of which satisfies the pre-med statistics requirement. Math 141 is not open to students who have a 4 or 5 on the AP statistics exam.

It is important that students considering a major in mathematics complete Math 220 and 221 by the end of the sophomore year. Consequently, Math 121/126/127 should be completed by the end of the first year. The department encourages its majors to design well-balanced programs with representative courses from the arts, foreign languages, physical sciences, and social sciences.

For more information, please visit <https://math.vassar.edu>.

## 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. 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, and the social implications of, and ethical issues associated with, various media.

The Program includes a set of core courses that provide students with a strong base in media theory and analysis, beginning with a thoroughly 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 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. Because the Media Studies concentration incorporates courses originating within the Program as well as a wide range of courses from other Departments and Programs, students wishing to major in Media Studies should consult with the Program Director as early as possible to formulate their course of study.

Students with questions about the Program or its courses should feel free to email the Program Director, Eva Woods Peiró, at [evwoods@vassar.edu](mailto:evwoods@vassar.edu), or the Program's Administrative Assistant, Melissa McAlley, at [mmcalley@vassar.edu](mailto:mmcalley@vassar.edu).

For more information, visit <https://mediastudies.vassar.edu/>

## 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 elect work from three groups of disciplines: art history and music; history, political science, philosophy, and religion; 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 <https://medievalandrenaissancestudies.vassar.edu.>

## 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 (Music 101), Harmony (Music 105/106), Introduction World Music (Music 136), 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. *Please note that all private lessons are intensives courses.*

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

**Music Major:** For those students planning on majoring in music or pursuing a correlate, Music 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 tonal harmony in the 18th and 19th centuries and requires familiarity with the rudiments of music.

**Correlate Sequence:** Students may elect to pursue a correlate sequence in Music and Culture, Composition, History, Theory, or Performance.

**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: “Vassar Music Treasures” and “Music from Outer Space.”

**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.

**Advanced Placement:** An advanced placement test is offered during orientation week for those students who have had previous work in basic harmony and musicianship skills to determine whether they can be excused from Music 105 and/or Music 207. A student may receive college credit if appropriate proficiency is demonstrated.

**Auditions for Lessons and Ensembles:** An audition is required for all voice and most instrumental lessons. Starting Monday, August 24, 2020 audition sign-up sheets for ensembles and lessons will be posted on the board outside Skinner 105.

**Co-requisite Requirements:** The Music Department believes that music performance in a liberal arts environment should be studied in the context of some 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: 101, 105, 136, or 180.

**Scholarships for Lessons:** Scholarships for students electing credited lessons are available to those on financial aid for lessons in one instrument each semester. Eligible students must apply for the scholarship at the beginning of each semester. Please visit <http://admissions.vassar.edu/financial-aid/>.

For more information, please visit <https://music.vassar.edu>.

## **Neuroscience and Behavior**

Neuroscience and Behavior is a multidisciplinary program that is interested in how interactions of brain, body, and environment contribute to animal (including human) behavior.

Neuroscientists and Behaviorists study the structure and function of the nervous system, the development and evolution of neural and behavioral systems, and the co-actions and interactions among behavior, environment, physiology, and heredity. The study of brain and

behavior requires students to delve deeply into nervous system mechanisms at all levels of analysis, from molecules to synapses to neurons, from circuits to computational algorithms to behavior and cognition to mathematical modeling of neuroscience and behavior related processes. This program is ideal for students with interests in biological and psychological sciences specifically, but also students interested in incorporating chemistry, computer science, physics and astronomy, mathematics and statistics, and philosophy into the study of brain and behavior.

Interested first-year students should take Biology 107 and Biology 108 (required) and Neuroscience 105 (required; to be taken after Biology 107 or with AP (5) /IB HL (6 or 7) equivalent credit); other recommended courses include, but are not limited to Psychological Science 105, Cognitive Science 100, 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 our website at <https://neuroscienceandbehavior.vassar.edu>. If you have questions that are not answered when you visit the website, please email [neuroscienceandbehavior@vassar.edu](mailto:neuroscienceandbehavior@vassar.edu).

## 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 by means of any of five courses open to them. This selection allows students to align their first philosophy course with their interests or plans for future study.

Philosophy 101 and 102 both 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. Both courses constitute 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.

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 the mind and the 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.

Philosophy 110 is an introduction to ancient Chinese philosophy, roughly from 500 to 221 BC, 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.

For more information, please visit <https://philosophy.vassar.edu>.

## 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, basketball, bowling, fencing, flag football, fundamentals of conditioning, golf, indoor rowing, soccer, squash, swimming, tennis, triathlon training, volleyball, 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 credits for participation on a varsity athletics team with 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, please contact the Associate Director of Athletics for Physical Education, Kathy Campbell, at 845-437-7460.

## 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, Indiana University, NC State, and University of Florida. 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 Professor Colette Salyk (cosalyk@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 and spectrograph. Various small telescopes, including a solar telescope, are also at the site. We support a program of monitoring variable objects by student observers at the observatory. Vassar is part of the international KELT-FUN network for exoplanet transit follow-up observing. Research is also done during the academic year and during the summer (through the URSI program) using data from the Hubble Space Telescope, ALMA, and other national observatories. Recent student-faculty research projects have included work on the structure of galaxies, including galaxies in the early universe, protoplanetary disks, exoplanet searches, stellar spectroscopy, and mass transfer binaries. Much of the analytical work on these projects is done on department computers optimized for image processing. 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 Keck Northeast Astronomy Consortium of eight liberal arts institutions, a group that exchanges summer research students, hosts an annual symposium, and collaborates on several research projects.

America's first woman astronomer, Maria Mitchell, was also the first director of the original Vassar College Observatory, now an 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, 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 a technical career in another discipline. 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, and students interested in physics education should consult with Professor Schwarz, for advice on appropriate courses.

First-year students who are interested in majoring in physics should elect Physics 113/114 in their first year (or other physics courses, as determined by advanced placement), as well as an appropriate mathematics course. First-year students who have not taken calculus must enroll in calculus concurrently with physics. Physics 113/114 are appropriate both for potential physics majors as well as those planning possible majors in other sciences and for pre-medical students, although there are also Physics 111/112 algebra-based introductory physics courses intended for pre-meds who do not wish a calculus-based course. 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 their program.

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 0.5 units of credit each for a score of 4 or 5. Students with AP Physics credit should plan on Physics 114 or Physics 200 as their first course and should consult <https://physicsandastronomy.vassar.edu/physics/placement.html> to determine which is best for them.. Students who have taken IB, A-levels, or another advanced high school physics course should take our online placement exam, available from June 22 through September 4 also at <https://physicsandastronomy.vassar.edu/physics/placement.html>. Those taking the test will hear from a faculty member regarding the results and advice on course selection within seven days of taking the test. Students are strongly encouraged to take the exam before selecting your courses. Additional placement issues should be addressed by consultation with the department during departmental 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)) prior to selecting courses.

Special note to pre-medical students: The department recommends that students seeking admission to medical school enroll in Physics 111/112 at Vassar or 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 director of fellowships and pre-health advising.

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

There are opportunities in the department for research collaboration and thesis work with faculty in fields including physics education, ultrafast laser physics, atomic, molecular and optical physics, photonics, 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 <https://physicsandastronomy.vassar.edu>.

## 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 <https://politicalscience.vassar.edu>.

## 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, offering the same basic content as the survey course, but views the research areas of psychological science through a topical lens. The special topics section for Psychological Science 105 in 2020-21 will be *Psychological*

*Science and Environmental Sustainability*. The department also offers a First-Year Writing Seminar, Psychology 108: Reading and Writing in Psychology. The topics of this year's writing seminars, offered in the fall and spring semesters, respectively, will be *Growing Up Poor in America* and *The Art and Science of Resilience*.

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 prematriculation 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 consult with the department and obtain a copy of the Psychological Science Major's Handbook. For more information, please visit the Psychological Science website ([psychologicalscience.vassar.edu](http://psychologicalscience.vassar.edu)), 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 <https://religion.vassar.edu>.

## 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.

Every fall, in partnership with the Hermitage Museum, the department conducts a semester-long junior year abroad program in St. Petersburg that offers our students unique access to the cultural treasures of Russia's imperial capital.

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) 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 advising session during the orientation period.

All departmental courses offered in translation are open to freshmen. The topics of such courses include literature, both classical and modern, theatre, 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. However, those who have taken Russian in high school or have a knowledge of the language from home should sign up for a placement test that will indicate the appropriate level at which they should enroll.

Every semester the department offers a specialized seminar on a literary or cultural topic given entirely in Russian; access to such courses is open to students who have completed intermediate Russian or have the equivalent language competency. Additionally, some courses taught in English have a supplementary section with readings in Russian.

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 ("The Post-Soviets") and from many other extracurricular activities.

The department has established the Masha N. Vorobiov Prize, which is awarded each spring to a promising student of Russian who intends to pursue summer study of the language.

For more information, please visit <https://russian.vassar.edu>.

## **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, 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 <https://sciencetechnologyandsociety.vassar.edu>, or contact the Director, David Esteban, [daesteban@vassar.edu](mailto:daesteban@vassar.edu). Email inquiries can also be sent to [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 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. Please note that Beginning American Sign Language 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 135.

For more information, visit <https://silp.vassar.edu> or contact the coordinator, Lioba Gerhardi (ligerhardi@vassar.edu).

## Sociology

The Department of Sociology offers a diverse curriculum that deepens and broadens students' understandings of modern society through examination of social issues, social structures and culture, and social justice. Our courses can be understood in terms of six basic themes—social justice, inequality and difference, culture, public policy, globalization, and theory—and highlight distinct perspectives to focus on individuals as members of collective forms and groups including (but not limited to) families, age, class, gender/sexuality, and race/ethnicity/nation. 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 undertake individual work by choosing to do a senior thesis or a senior project. Students must complete one to fulfill the requirements of the major. Either option allows students 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 department website for more information about our faculty, course offerings, and other resources: <https://Sociology.vassar.edu>.

## **Spanish** (see Hispanic Studies)

## **Victorian Studies**

The Program in Victorian Studies enables students to combine courses offered in several departments with independent work and, through an interdisciplinary approach, to examine the assumptions, ideas, ideals, institutions, society, and culture of Victorian Britain, which was at the height of its power as a global empire in the nineteenth century.

First-year students considering a possible Victorian Studies major or correlate sequence are encouraged to consult with the Victorian Studies coordinator or any of the advisors. The intellectual foundation for the major is best laid by taking “Revolution, Evolution, and the Global Nineteenth Century” (History/Victorian Studies/College Course 150) as well as survey courses or 100-level courses in at least three of the departments involved in this interdisciplinary program.

A grounding in the literature and history of the nineteenth century is expected, and potential majors would do well to take English literature courses as well as courses in History that focus on the nineteenth century, or on Great Britain, such as British History: James I (1603) to the Great War (History 151). Students interested in the study of nineteenth-century art should enroll in Art 106 in their first year.

For more information, please visit <https://victorianstudies.vassar.edu> or email [zlotnick@vassar.edu](mailto:zlotnick@vassar.edu).

## **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 relationships of cities, global dynamics of urbanization, urban ways of life, urban 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 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 Space, Place, Environment (Urban Studies 250); Cities of the

Global South (Urban Studies 252); Gender and Social Space (Urban Studies 270); and other urban studies courses.

As juniors or seniors, majors take a seminar on Advanced Debates in Urban Studies (Urban Studies 303), which can be repeated for credit if the topic has changed. Previous advanced seminars have focused on such topics as “Greening the City,” “Plotting the Invisible City,” “Memory and the City,” and “Musical Urbanism.” A variety of other seminars are offered to advanced students. 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 a year-long senior thesis or senior project. Entering students with previous courses in urban studies may confer with the program for advice on advanced placement, although there is no standard AP test.

For more information, please visit <https://urbanstudies.vassar.edu> or email the program director, Tobias Armbrorst ([toarmbrorst@vassar.edu](mailto:toarmbrorst@vassar.edu)) or the administrative assistant, Alison Mateer ([almateer@vassar.edu](mailto:almateer@vassar.edu)).

## Women’s Studies

The Women’s Studies Program at Vassar brings together faculty who share the conviction that gender and sexuality are fundamental categories of analysis across disciplines. As a multidisciplinary field, women’s studies teaches students to think critically about the multiple, intersecting systems of power through which sexual and gendered identities are constructed, and to engage with real-life political and ethical issues from diverse perspectives. The program offers courses that examine women and gender in a variety of historical, cultural, and political contexts, as well as courses that explore the intersections of feminist theory, queer theory, and activism.

First-year students interested in the major are encouraged to take Women’s Studies 130, Introduction to Women’s Studies, a team-taught course offered each semester that serves as a foundation for future study. Women Studies 130 introduces students to multidisciplinary methodologies, feminist history, and theoretical debates, with a particular focus on the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Beyond the introductory level, regularly offered courses include Introduction to Queer Studies (Women’s Studies 201), Gender in American Popular Media (Women’s Studies 240), Topics in the Construction of Gender (Women’s Studies 241), Making Waves: Topics in Feminist Activism (Women’s Studies 245), Feminist Theory (Women’s Studies 250), and Global Feminism (Women’s Studies 251). A full list of courses can be found in the catalogue.

In addition to a major in Women’s Studies, the program offers correlates in both Women’s Studies and Queer Studies. For more information, please visit <https://womensstudies.vassar.edu>, or contact the director, Hiram Perez ([hiperez@vassar.edu](mailto:hiperez@vassar.edu)).

## OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

### The VCard

Vassar has a one-card identification card system. The VCard lets you into your residential house and serves as your library card, laundry card, Meal Plan card, VCash account, and your VPrint account. Each student will also get \$100.00 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 \$100 in Arlington Bucks is depleted, then any off-campus merchant purchases will default to the funds in your Vcash account.

First-year students receive their VCard during New Student Orientation. It is your key to the residence houses. It is also used to purchase books and other items at the Vassar College Store using VCash.

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 <http://dining.vassar.edu/>. 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 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 account, credited once per semester with \$32.50 (the equivalent of 650 prints) at no charge to you. If you exceed this limit, the system will automatically start deducting from your VCash account for printing.

For more information or a list of the participating businesses off-campus, please visit <https://card.vassar.edu/>.

### 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 Key Bank, the machine honors money cards for all NYCE members. 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**

Monday through Friday, 9:00 am–5:00 pm when classes are in session, 9:00 am-4:30 pm during break periods. No retail postage sales available. No acceptance of personal outgoing letters or packages without postage affixed.

<https://mailroom.vassar.edu/>

## **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 Central Receiving Department needs 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 Mail Room or Receiving 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 our website at <https://storesandreceiving.vassar.edu/>.

## Transportation and Automobile Regulations

The Vassar College Transportation Department provides shuttle transportation to JFK, LaGuardia, and Stewart airports at various times during the school year. Weeks prior to the October, winter, spring and summer breaks, the dates and times of the shuttle schedule are sent out in a campus wide email to all students. We also provide a free shuttle service to the Poughkeepsie train station at each of the academic breaks.

Each student is charged a fee for the airport trip. We only provide shuttle service from the campus to the airports; we do not provide shuttles from the airports to the campus. Many companies also offer transportation between Vassar and all major airports in this area.

All student vehicles driven or parked on campus must be registered. The Safety and Security Office (located at 2500 New Hackensack Road) is open on weekdays from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm for vehicle registration. There is a fee for registering a vehicle that will be charged to your Vassar account.

Cars belonging to first-year students are only allowed in the New Hackensack lot. They are not permitted anywhere else on campus without an unloading pass.

Vassar students are also able to take advantage of Zipcar's low rate car-sharing program. For more details or to sign up, please go to <http://zipcar.com/vassar>.

## Vassar College Store Hours for Move-in Week, Fall 2020

The Vassar College Store is open Monday through Saturday. Please check the Vassar College Store website at [collegestore.vassar.edu](http://collegestore.vassar.edu) for specific hours.

## Important Telephone Numbers AREA CODE - 845

Emergency calls .....	437-7333
Campus Response Center.....	437-5221
Security .....	437-5200
Accessibility and Educational Opportunity .....	437-7584
Admissions.....	437-7300
Advisor to International Students .....	437-5831
ALANA Center .....	437-5954
Associate Dean of the College for Residential Life & Wellness, Luis Inoa.....	437-5315
Campus Activities .....	437-5370
Office of Student Growth and Engagement.....	437-5426
Career Development .....	437-5285
Office of Community-Engaged Learning.....	437-5280
Computer Store .....	437-7224
Counseling Service.....	437-5700
Dean of the College, Carlos Alamo .....	437-5600
Dean of First-Year Students, Jennifer Herrera.....	437-5258
Dean of Studies, Debra Zeifman .....	437-5257
Financial Aid / Student Financial Services .....	437-5320
Health Promotion and Education.....	437-7769
Health Services.....	437-5800
Libraries.....	437-5760
General Stores / Receiving .....	437-5693
Registrar .....	437-5270
Religious and Spiritual Life .....	437-5550
Residential Life .....	437-5860
Student Employment Office / Student Financial Services.....	437-5320
Vassar College Store .....	437-5870
Vassar College Dining, Gordon Commons .....	437-5830
Vassar Student Association .....	437-5381
V-CARD Office .....	437-3333

## Quick Reference Web Addresses

Accessibility and Educational Opportunity	<a href="http://accessibilityandeducationalopportunity.vassar.edu">accessibilityandeducationalopportunity.vassar.edu</a>
Ask Banner	<a href="http://aisapps.vassar.edu/askbanner/">aisapps.vassar.edu/askbanner/</a>
Associate Dean of the College for Residential Life & Wellness	<a href="http://deanofstudents.vassar.edu">deanofstudents.vassar.edu</a>
Dean of First-Year Students	<a href="http://deanoffirstyearstudents.vassar.edu/">deanoffirstyearstudents.vassar.edu/</a>
Catalogue	<a href="http://catalogue.vassar.edu">catalogue.vassar.edu</a>
CIS Service Desk	<a href="http://servicedesk.vassar.edu/welcome.portal">servicedesk.vassar.edu/welcome.portal</a>
Computing and Information Services	<a href="http://computing.vassar.edu/">computing.vassar.edu/</a>
Counseling Service	<a href="http://counselingservice.vassar.edu">counselingservice.vassar.edu</a>
Financial Aid	<a href="http://studentfinancialservices.vassar.edu">studentfinancialservices.vassar.edu</a>
Health Services	<a href="http://healthservice.vassar.edu">healthservice.vassar.edu</a>
Learning, Teaching and Resource Center	<a href="http://ltrc.vassar.edu/">ltrc.vassar.edu/</a>

Registrar	<a href="http://registrar.vassar.edu">registrar.vassar.edu</a>
Residential Life	<a href="http://residentiallife.vassar.edu">residentiallife.vassar.edu</a>
Residential Operations Center (The ROC)	<a href="http://residentiallife.vassar.edu/staff/roc.html">residentiallife.vassar.edu/staff/roc.html</a>
Student Financial Services	<a href="http://studentaccounts.vassar.edu">studentaccounts.vassar.edu</a>