College Core Curriculum is the group of foundational courses that every student must complete in order to earn a degree from the College of Arts and Science. It represents the considered judgment of the faculty about what every College graduate should know as a part of his or her liberal arts education. In other undergraduate divisions at NYU, faculty of those schools have adopted parts of the curriculum to provide a core experience in the liberal arts for their students as well. Because it is shared by students across different schools, majors, and programs, the Core is also sometimes called the general education curriculum.

What's “liberal” about the liberal arts?

“Liberal” comes from the Latin word *liber*, meaning “free.” In ancient Greece and Rome, liberal education was the pursuit of free men, that is, those with the means and leisure to be able to devote themselves to learning, rather than to labor.

Today when we speak of “liberal education,” we mean an education in the “liberal arts,” an education for men and women that frees intellectual capacities and the imagination through the study of human endeavor on a broad scale, from music, art, and philosophy, to encounters with nature and with cultures of other times and places.

What are the “liberal arts”?

Sometimes also called the “arts and sciences” or “liberal arts and sciences,” in the medieval university curriculum they were seven in number: grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.

Today, the liberal arts encompass all the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, mathematics, and the natural sciences—all those areas of inquiry that are pursued for the sake of expanding human knowledge, rather than as training for a particular profession.

What's the practical value of liberal education?

*Education in the liberal arts builds your critical, analytic, and communications skills,* giving you the preparation you need to flourish in the world of work and to become a productive member of society.

More than this, however, *education in the liberal arts is preparation for life as a responsible, actively engaged citizen,* equipping you with the open-mindedness and soundness of judgment necessary to reason, act, and lead. Indeed, this University—and the whole enterprise of higher education in the United States—was founded on the belief that college graduates have a special opportunity and responsibility to contribute to the common good.

What are the faculty’s specific goals for the College Core Curriculum?

In designing the Core Curriculum, the faculty sought to ensure that students would expand their capacity to communicate effectively, by improving their writing and gaining proficiency in a foreign language. This is why every undergraduate must complete *Writing the Essay* or its equivalent, and why the University maintains extensive opportunities for language study both in New York and at the global sites, as well as the non-credit Speaking Freely program.
The faculty also wanted to provide every student with opportunities to build his or her quantitative skills and to study the natural sciences. These studies give you the knowledge you need to be an independent-minded citizen in a world increasingly shaped by science and technology, where urgent questions of policy require prudent, well-informed judgments. We aim, too, to foster your appreciation of mathematics and the sciences as liberal pursuits.

We likewise believe that students should gain knowledge of the social sciences, which study how humans communicate, organize their communities, worship, use language, and engage in trade and diplomacy. Because the fine and performing arts connect us in unexpected ways, give pleasure, and reveal new perspectives on the world, the Core Curriculum also includes courses in Expressive Culture.

Finally, students should come to think of themselves as citizens of a larger world by gaining the ability to comprehend how people remote from themselves understand, experience, and imagine their lives. They should also come to know themselves better by engaging critically with the significant ideas that have shaped contemporary culture. For these reasons, all students in the Core Curriculum complete a course in Cultures and Contexts and a course in Texts and Ideas.

Does all this mean that you will take a few courses outside your main interests and comfort zone? That is our intention: Stretching the mind and rethinking old assumptions and beliefs are important preparation for your future. The Core Curriculum represents our commitment as a faculty to assuring you an undergraduate education that will equip you for success in your later careers and prepare you for a life of thinking critically and creatively about who you are, who you want to be, and how to better the world we live in.