

# REQUIREMENTS FOR THE LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE

Barnard's motto, *Following the Way of Reason* (Hepomene toi logismoi), signals the College's continuing commitment to the intellectual breadth and analytical depth of the liberal arts tradition. Since the College's founding in 1889, a Barnard education has been characterized by its distinctive combination of elements: a rigorous, broadly based framework of general education requirements; a focused inquiry into major subjects; and a range of electives. Together these elements allow for substantial personal choice. The exact structure of College requirements has varied over the past century in response to changes in society, education, and student needs. Today, candidates for the Barnard degree must complete:

- general education courses:
  - 2 First-Year Foundations courses (First-Year Writing and First-Year Seminar)
  - a physical education course
  - Distributional Requirements
  - Modes of Thinking
- a major with all of its requirements
- open electives
- an overall GPA of 2.0 or higher.

Students entering as first-years must complete 122 points (120 points for students entering before Autumn 2003). Reflecting the College's view that physical well-being is an essential part of a healthy and productive life, they must also fulfill a physical education requirement. (Of the 122 required points, one must be for PE. Transfer students who enter with at least 24 points of credit must earn 121 points, of which one is for PE.)

## The Barnard Education

A Barnard education seeks to provide women with the tools and techniques needed to think critically and act effectively in the world today. It fosters a respect for learning, an aptitude for analysis, and a competence in the demanding disciplines of the liberal arts and sciences. By virtue of its special mission and location, Barnard strives to give its students insight into interconnected worlds of knowledge and experience.

The Barnard curriculum enables students to develop their strengths in language and literature, in social and historical analysis, in mathematics and the natural sciences, in the arts and the humanities, and in digital and technological thinking—distinct areas of study that incorporate but also transcend traditional academic disciplines. Built around major methods for apprehending the world and organizing knowledge, the College's basic requirements are designed to equip students to respond both critically and creatively to a rapidly changing world. Barnard students learn to employ a variety of analytical methods in order to engage new complexities of social evolution and scientific knowledge. The College dedicates itself to imparting to every student self-renewing intellectual resourcefulness, the mark of a liberal arts education.

The College faculty encourages each student to select courses in a manner that ensures exposure to distinct forms and traditions of

knowledge and to the human experience as lived in various parts of the world. Each student is encouraged to make selections that develop connections among the elements of the curriculum, that promote understanding of global issues, and that acknowledge both the diversity and the commonality of human endeavors in civilizations around the world and through time.

As a college for women, Barnard embraces its responsibility to address issues of gender in all their complexity and urgency, and is committed to an integrated curriculum that recognizes the importance of gender in all forms of human endeavor. The College encourages students to profit from the exceptional and varied opportunities to explore women's histories, challenges, and achievements. Gender-related matters are incorporated into a wide range of courses across the academic disciplines.

Barnard also encourages students to take full advantage of the global city of New York—its international character and economic power; its prominence in science, medicine, and the arts; its cultural abundance; its diverse neighborhoods and peoples; and its architectural richness. In their studies, their work, and their personal lives, Barnard students can avail themselves of the city's unparalleled resources. As an extended campus, New York serves not only as a multidisciplinary research laboratory for coursework and guided field experiences, but also as the site for a vast array of internships and wide-ranging, city-based student activities.

Barnard seeks to ensure that students become aware of, and knowledgeable about, their physical being. Students complete courses that focus on physical activity, fitness, and well-being. The College also provides additional opportunities for students to exercise and to learn more about fundamental elements of good health and women's health issues.

## Majors and Electives

Departments and programs establish majors to provide a structured, focused investigation of an academic discipline or interdisciplinary field of study. Many of Barnard's majors also require students to take courses in cognate disciplines. Generally, there are three levels of study within each major: introductory survey courses; mid-level courses that cover more specialized subject matter and where attention is paid to the methodologies, including the writing styles and formats, of the discipline; and advanced-level seminars with an emphasis on independent research. The College has a long-standing commitment to preparing students sufficiently in a subject so that they may undertake a semester- or year-long project, usually during the senior year, on a topic related to their major.

All students complete the requirements of an approved major. Majors vary in the number of credits required. For students transferring credit from another college or university, a minimum of six semester courses towards the major must be completed while the student is in residence at Barnard. Only courses graded C– or higher will be credited toward the major.

A student must officially declare their chosen major(s) with the Office of the Registrar and with the major department or program, normally in the second term of their sophomore year. The major(s) may be chosen from any listed in the [Barnard Catalogue](#).

A student may major in two fields ("double major") by satisfying all the major requirements prescribed by each department, with no overlapping courses. A student may also opt to double major with one integrating

senior project after consultation with the two departments. Other than the senior project, the student must complete the standard requirements for each major, with no overlapping courses.

A “special” or “special combined” major is developed by a student when they feel that their goals or interests cannot be satisfied within an established departmental major. “Special” majors comprise courses from throughout the College and University curricula and should include at least 12 courses. A faculty member will advise the student for the special major. “Special combined” majors integrate in-depth coursework in two established academic departments and should include at least 7 courses from each department. A faculty member from each department will advise the student throughout their study. The selected courses for the “special” or “special combined” major must demonstrate breadth (adequate coverage within a field), depth (sufficiently advanced coverage), and coherence (evidence of the intellectual integrity of the major). A special or special combined major requires the approval of the Committee on Programs and Academic Standing.

Apart from fulfilling general education requirements and major requirements, a student completes the remainder of the 122-point requirement with elective courses, either within or outside the major department, subject to the approval of the appropriate adviser. A minimum of 102 points of traditional liberal arts coursework is required for most Barnard majors. For the student who majors in a studio or performance-based field, 90 points of traditional liberal arts coursework is required.

No more than 18 points of studio, performing arts, or professional school courses may be credited toward the B.A. degree. Within this category, the following limits exist by discipline:

- A maximum of four arts studio courses
- A maximum of six courses in instrumental instruction (except for Music majors and minors, who may receive credit for eight, including piano instruction)
- A maximum of six studio courses in Theatre (except for Theatre majors who may receive credit for 24 points of studio)
- A maximum of twelve courses (12 credits) in dance technique (except for Dance majors who may receive credit for 24 points of dance). If a student is applying 1 or 2 credits of dance technique classes towards the P.E. requirement, they can take a maximum of 12 credits in dance technique in addition to the credits used for P.E.
- A maximum of two professional school courses (e.g., business school, journalism school, etc.)

Exceptions to this rule are allowed only for courses in the major field or for courses taken in fulfillment of requirements for dual- and joint-degree programs with professional schools of the University. A maximum of 24 points may be credited for studio or performance courses in the major field.

## Minors

The selection of a minor field of study is optional. A minor requires at least five courses (three of which must be qualifying Barnard or Columbia courses), each worth 3 or more points, and may be requested by any student who has declared a major after completing a minimum of three courses in the minor field. Requirements depend on the minor chosen (see individual department curriculum statements); courses

are selected in consultation with the department chair. Courses for the major and minor may not overlap (except by petition from the minor department’s chair, in cases where the minor requires more than 18 points, the major requires more than 40 points, the overlapping courses are required for both major and minor, and the request is for no more than two overlapping courses). Minor courses may also be used in satisfaction of general education requirements. To qualify for the minor, a course must be taken for a letter grade and the student must receive at least a C-.