

LITERATURE/HUMANITIES

Courses in the humanities immerse students in literature, language, and culture, and explore the meaning of humanity across time and place. All GS students must have two courses in this area, with at least one course specifically in literature. GS students may elect to take the two-semester Columbia Core sequence in Masterpieces of Western Literature and Philosophy, [HUMA GS1001-HUMA GS1002](#) (commonly known as "Literature Humanities" or "Lit Hum"), to fulfill the literature and humanities requirements.

The acclaimed Literature Humanities core sequence is designed to enhance students' understanding of main lines of literary and philosophical development that have shaped western thought for nearly three millennia. Much more than a survey of great books, Lit Hum encourages students to become critical readers of the literary past we have inherited. Although most of our Lit Hum works (and the cultures they represent) are remote from us, we nonetheless learn something about ourselves in struggling to appreciate and understand them. Why did these works cause previous generations to value them so highly? In what ways are our authors in conversation with each other? How are these books relevant to our lives? In the end, what do we gain from them? These questions offer just a sample of the kinds of provocation that Lit Hum is meant to arouse. Students should not expect Lit Hum to teach them what these texts are about. Rather, it asks students to join a small group of classmates to raise questions and debate answers. Lit Hum seminars should fascinate, delight, and confound. Our hope is that students will return to these books, their beauty, and the profound questions they raise over the course of their lives.

This year-long course is particularly recommended for students who are planning to major in English literature or philosophy. It is required for students entering with under 30 transfer credits in summer 2020 and after who have not already fulfilled these requirements through transfer credits. (The full course is required for students without transfer credits in the humanities, and one term is required for students with three or more transfer credits in the humanities.) It is recommended, but not required, that students take HUMA GS1001-HUMA GS1002 sequentially. Interested students are encouraged to refer to the 2024-2025 Masterpieces of Western Literature and Philosophy [reading list](#) for more information.

Literature Requirement

All GS students must take a literature course at Columbia. To fulfill the literature requirement, a course must focus on the study of poetry, fiction, drama, or related genres. Typically, such courses include the offerings from the Columbia Department of English and Comparative Literature, courses on literatures in translation, and/or literature courses in languages other than English at the 3000 level or above. Students may also fulfill the requirement by taking one semester of Literature Humanities. Courses that focus primarily on literary theory, film, music, creative writing, language instruction, or other non-literary interdisciplinary topics do not count for the literature requirement.

Humanities Requirement

Humanities courses offer ways to understand the development of cultures and how the human experience is expressed. A course from one of the following departments or interdisciplinary programs may count towards the humanities requirement. In language departments, only courses at the 3000 level or above, excluding courses focused on language instruction, may apply.

- Archaeology
- Architecture
- Art History and Archaeology
- Classics
- English and Comparative Literature
- Film Studies
- French
- Germanic Languages
- History*
- Italian
- Latin American and Iberian Cultures
- Linguistics
- Music
- Philosophy
- Religion
- Slavic Languages

*Courses from the Department of History may be counted toward the social science or the humanities requirement, but in no case may more than two courses from one department be used to fulfill Core requirements

Interdisciplinary Programs

The following interdisciplinary programs offer courses in both humanities and social sciences. GS advisors must determine the appropriate category for a course when taken to satisfy a Core requirement.

- African-American Studies
- American Studies
- Ethnicity and Race Studies
- Comparative Literature and Society
- East Asian Languages and Cultures
- Hispanic Studies
- Human Rights
- Jewish Studies
- Latin American and Caribbean Studies
- Linguistics
- Medicine, Literature, and Society
- Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies
- Women's and Gender Studies

Note: Only the first semester of Contemporary Civilization may be applied to either the humanities requirement or the social science requirement (but not both). The second semester may only be applied to the social science requirement