

# DEGREE FULFILLMENT

## The Bachelor's Degree

General Studies students earn a Bachelor of Arts degree (BA). The Bachelor of Arts combines breadth of study in a range of subjects and disciplines, represented by the core requirements, with specialization in a major field of study. Whether they major in the sciences, humanities, or social sciences, all undergraduate GS students receive a BA degree.

To qualify for a bachelor's degree, students are required to complete 124 points with a minimum grade point average of 2.0. The 124 points are distributed among three general categories: core requirements, major requirements, and electives. GS undergraduates are required to complete a major in order to graduate. See [Majors and Concentrations](#) for details about individual major programs.

## The Major

In addition to the Core, all undergraduate GS students must fulfill the requirements for a major to qualify for a bachelor's degree from Columbia. The purpose of a major is to provide students with an opportunity to delve deeply into the study of a particular subject, developing expertise and critical thinking through sustained and advanced work. Students may declare their respective majors as early as their first semester at GS provided they have completed at least 45 points toward the degree, with at least 12 points in progress at Columbia. Majors are noted on the Columbia transcript.

## Policies Governing Majors and Concentrations

Students are encouraged to consider various fields of study and to become familiar with the requirements for a particular major before filing a major declaration. In most cases, students should begin coursework in the discipline before declaring the major. Faculty members are excellent resources for discussing possible majors. Students may review departmental websites for detailed information on major requirements and courses.

All departments offer relevant programming and events for prospective majors during the academic year. Students should plan to attend departmental Open Houses to obtain more information about various majors from faculty and students in the major departments. Such Open Houses are usually held in the spring term and are publicized through the DOS News & Announcements newsletter. Many departments also have informational handouts for potential majors in their departmental offices.

Students eligible to declare a major may do so during designated major declaration periods, namely October 1 - November 1 in the fall, and February 15 - March 15 in the spring. Certain majors require an extensive application process and approval by the department. Information about the application process and relevant deadlines are specified on the major department websites.

Students are expected to meet the requirements for the major as outlined at the time the major is declared. Students who do not complete the major requirements within five years of declaring may be expected to comply with any new requirements that have been subsequently established.

The following rules pertain to all majors; exceptions to any of these rules are noted by individual departments on their official websites:

1. No course with a grade of D will be credited toward the major.
2. No course with the mark of P (Pass) will count toward the major.
3. No more than two courses may overlap with GS core requirements.
4. Students must check with departments for permission to count summer session classes and courses taken while studying abroad toward the major.
5. No more than 12 transfer credits may count toward the major (some departments have a different limit).
6. Students must submit all relevant paperwork to a department for consideration of transfer credit towards the major in the same semester in which the major is declared; failure to meet this deadline may result in the loss of eligibility to transfer credit toward the major.
7. At least 18 points of coursework toward the major must be taken at Columbia.
8. Students who have not declared a major prior to earning 90 points will be placed on Registration Hold and be subject to Academic Warning.

## Concentrations

Concentrations are optional and provide students with the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of a secondary field of study in addition to the major. Most departments and programs offer a concentration. Some programs offer only a concentration. See [Major Fields of Study](#) for more information about concentrations and requirements.

## Choosing a Concentration

Courses counted toward a departmental concentration may simultaneously fulfill core requirements as long as the total number of overlapping courses from the major and/or concentration counted to the core does not exceed two.

Students interested in choosing a concentration in addition to a major must do so before completing 80 points toward the degree and must have a minimum GPA of 3.2. In order for a concentration to appear on the Columbia transcript, students must file paperwork with their GS advisor.

## Transfer Credit Toward the Major and Concentration

The director of undergraduate studies (DUS) in each department is authorized to accept up to 12 GS-approved transfer credits toward the major; some departments have a different limit. The limit on transfer credits toward a concentration is six. Students must check individual department policies concerning transfer credits. Credits from other institutions of higher education do not automatically transfer—and in some cases are not approved—toward the Columbia major or concentration, although they may count as electives or core requirements.

It is the student's responsibility to discuss with the DUS the possibility of counting transfer credits toward the major or concentration and to provide the department with all required documents. When reviewing transfer credits the DUS requires copies of official transcripts from the other institutions and often the syllabi for the courses in question (supplied by the student).

**Note:** As part of the transfer course evaluation, students must submit all relevant paperwork to the departments in the same semester in which the major or concentration is declared; failure to meet this deadline will result in the loss of eligibility for transfer credit toward the major or concentration.

## Double Majors

Students should have a strong academic record, and excellent academic reasons for choosing to declare two programs (majors and concentrations). Students who wish to pursue two programs must declare both programs prior to completing 80 points toward the degree. Students who wish to declare two programs must have a minimum GPA of 3.2.

Students cannot declare two programs owned by the same offering unit (department, institute, or center). For example, a student may not declare programs in Russian Language and Culture and in Slavic Studies, both of which are owned by the Department of Slavic Languages; similarly, a student may not declare programs in Mathematics and in Applied Mathematics, both of which are owned by the Department of Mathematics. All combined majors (e.g., Economics-Political Science) will be considered as owned by both offering units, so that a student may not, for example, major in both Political Science and Economics-Political Science.

### Double Counting

Students who declare two programs may, in some cases, overlap requirements for the two programs. There are three scenarios in which students may double-count program requirements; students may take advantage of any or all of these scenarios:

- If two programs both require the same coursework to teach fundamental skills needed for the field, those courses may be applied to both programs; specifically: (1) elementary and intermediate foreign language courses, (2) the calculus sequence (I through IV, or Honors A and B), (3) introductory courses in Statistics (STAT UN1101 Introduction to Statistics or STAT UN1201 Calculus-Based Introduction to Statistics), and (4) the introductory course in computer programming (COMS W1004 Introduction to Computer Science and Programming in Java).
- Students may also apply a maximum of two courses to both programs, if each course is already approved toward the fulfillment of the student's two declared programs. Offering departments, institutes, or centers may choose to restrict the double-counting of particular courses, and such restrictions cannot be appealed.
- As with students with one declared program, the maximum number of courses students with two declared programs may overlap to the Core is two. Students may not overlap core courses with both of their programs (triple-counting).

## Declaring a Major or Concentration

From anthropology to astronomy, from economics to ethnicity and race studies, Columbia offers over eighty majors across foundational disciplines in the liberal arts. We encourage you to explore the many fields of study in the Arts and Sciences. Whichever department you choose as your academic home, you will have the opportunity to develop your critical thinking, refine your research skills, challenge your intellectual presuppositions, and expand your cultural horizons.

**Note:** While most majors can be officially declared using the online system, the departments listed below require written departmental approval.

## Beginning the Major Declaration Process

GS students may [declare a major or concentration online](#) during the following designated periods. Please refer to the [GS Academic Calendar](#) for specific dates.

### 2020-21 Academic Year Major Declaration Dates:

- October 1- November 1 for the fall term
- February 1 - March 1 for the spring term

GS students must fulfill the requirements for a major to receive a bachelor's degree from Columbia, and must formally declare a major program before completing 90 points towards the degree; concentrations must be declared prior to completing 80 points. Ideally students should declare a major after completing 45 points of coursework toward the degree. Students who matriculate with at least 45 transfer credits may declare their respective majors in their first term at GS as long as they have 12 points in progress.

Before declaring a major, students should read the information on majors and concentrations on the Degree Fulfillment page in order to understand the choices and policies relevant to these academic programs. Students may also consult with GS academic advisors, faculty members, department websites, and the department descriptions on the GS website when deciding on a major.

## Criteria for Declaring a Major

In order to declare a major students must meet the following criteria:

- Enrollment in at least one semester at GS with a minimum of 12 points completed or in progress
- Completion of at least 45 points toward the bachelor's degree (including transfer credit)
- Regular and satisfactory progress toward fulfilling the GS core requirements

Students who have completed 90 or more cumulative points without a major on record will be placed on registration hold and may receive an Academic Warning. Additionally, students who wish to make any changes to their declared major and/or concentration must see their academic advisor.

## Policies Governing Major Declaration

Before using the online major declaration system to declare an academic program, GS students should review the following academic policies, if applicable:

### Major/Concentration Degree Requirements

All students must complete at least one major to fulfill the degree requirements, and may select a second major, concentration, or special concentration in addition to this first selection. Selecting only a concentration will not fulfill the requirements for the bachelor's degree.

## Using the Online Major Declaration System

The [online major declaration system](#) will be available on the first day of each major declaration period.

Students who use the system must declare at least one major and are limited to a maximum of two program selections (the second choice of program may be either a major or a concentration).

Students will receive an email confirming their academic program and providing information about their department's practice for advising new majors.

Students with questions about declaring a major, or who experience any technical difficulties with the online major declaration system, should email [gsmajordeclaration@columbia.edu](mailto:gsmajordeclaration@columbia.edu).

### Majors Requiring Departmental Approval

While most majors can be officially declared using the online system, the departments listed below require written [departmental approval](#) (p. ).

Students selecting a major from any of the departments listed below must complete the [GS Electronic Major Declaration Form](#) and obtain departmental approval (for contacts and additional information, please click on the departmental links listed below). Once approval has been granted, students should email the completed form to their respective advisors to finalize the major declaration process.

- [Business Management](#) (special concentration) \*The 2020 application is closed. Students may apply for 2021 in December 2020. Please see [this page](#) for updated information.
- [Education](#) (special concentration) \*In addition to using the online major declaration system, student must also complete [this application](#). Please see [this page](#) for updated information.
- [Comparative Literature and Society](#) (Heyman Center) \*Students may apply to the major in Comparative Literature and Society by January 3, 2021. Please see [here](#) for additional application instructions and requirements.
- [Creative Writing](#) (617 Kent Hall) \*Students may only apply to the Creative Writing major in the spring semester.

Before visiting the departmental advisor, students should create a plan of study based upon the major's prerequisites, requirements, and course offerings, and bring this plan to the meeting with the departmental advisor.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Can I take courses that may count toward my major prior to declaring the major?

In exploring courses across the curriculum, many students enroll in courses that will count toward their major prior to officially declaring. This is a good way to receive an introduction to a major and to get an early start on some of the major requirements prior to declaring. However, students should be aware of the following:

1. Most departments do not allow a student to count toward the major or concentration courses in which the final grade earned is a "D" or a "P". (Exceptions are noted in departmental guidelines for the major.)
2. Some Columbia departments have restrictions on the number or kind of Barnard courses that will count toward the Columbia major or concentration.
3. Some departments, like Economics, will not count courses taken out of sequence.
4. When in doubt, check the department website.

### What if I cannot decide among several different options?

Students are urged to schedule an advising appointment with their GS advisor to discuss their interests and options. GS advisors can help students navigate their many questions and options when exploring possible majors. Students are also encouraged to consult with peer

advisors, upperclassmen and graduate students for advice. However, the most reliable resources for major advising are offered by the academic departments. Students are strongly advised to meet with the Director of Undergraduate Studies or other designated faculty to review major requirements; students should also review departmental websites often. Most departments and programs host Open Houses for potential majors during February and March; this information is provided in the GS weekly newsletters.

For tips on exploring majors and how a major may relate to a future career, visit the [Career Exploration](#) page.

### What if I am interested in a concentration?

All GS students must complete a major in order to graduate from GS. Concentrations are optional but, if pursued, should be declared. Students who wish to declare a concentration must do so before completing 80 points of coursework toward the degree. Prior to declaring a concentration, students must declare (or have declared) a major. In some cases, students who have attempted two majors may choose, later in the process, to change the second major to a concentration.

### What if I want to pursue a double major?

Students interested in declaring two programs should discuss the viability of this academic plan with their respective GS advisors. Students may also consider a concentration in one area and a major in the other. Students who are interested in double-majoring must declare both majors before completing 80 points toward the degree; exceptions to this rule may be made if the student has already made significant progress toward completing one or both majors prior to official declaration.

### What happens if I do not declare a major?

Students who do not declare a major by the time they have earned 90 points toward the degree will be placed on registration hold.

### What if I want to change my major or concentration after one or both have been declared?

Students should schedule an appointment with their GS advisor to discuss the reasons for any change in their academic plans and declared program(s) of study. The student and advisor will then complete the necessary paperwork to make such program adjustments. Students normally are not permitted to declare a new major after earning more than 90 points toward the degree; exceptions can be made for rare and compelling reasons. Students should follow a similar process for changing or dropping a concentration.

### Can any of my transfer credits count toward my major?

1. Each department has the discretion to count up to 12 credits in transfer toward the major; some departments have a different limit and may accept a different number of credits. Approval by GS of transfer credit toward the degree does not mean that this credit will automatically count toward the major.
2. At least 18 points toward the major must be taken at Columbia.
3. Students should consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) about which transfer courses may count toward the major departmental requirements.
4. Directors of Undergraduate Studies usually require transcripts and syllabi to make decisions about whether transfer credits will count toward the major.

### Can courses taken as part of study abroad count toward the major?

Students who receive permission by GS to study abroad must obtain official approval from their major department for any transfer courses to be counted toward the major.

**Can summer term courses count toward the major?**

Many departments have limits and restrictions regarding Columbia summer courses and the major. Students are strongly advised to check with their departments on such policies.

Any other exemptions to the above rules are clearly articulated on the GS website or on departmental websites.

## Electives

### Professional Courses

GS students are permitted up to six points of professional studies coursework toward their GS degrees. These six points may be counted in transfer credits or courses taken at Columbia, or a combination thereof. "Professional studies" include professional-level courses in law, business, journalism, or any of Columbia's other professional schools, as well as any comparable courses clearly professional in orientation.

GS students are not allowed to count professional courses in any of the professional studies programs offered through Columbia's School of Professional Studies toward the degree. Undergraduate cross-registration in courses offered by Columbia's graduate and professional schools is restricted and requires special approval.

Any professional course that is listed or cross-listed as an undergraduate course in business, public health, international and public affairs, journalism, or within a Columbia Arts and Sciences department is excluded from the six-point limit. The final decision of whether or not a course is professional rests with the GS Committee on Academic Affairs.

### Physical Education Courses

The Physical Education (P.E.) Department offers a variety of courses in the areas of aquatics, dance, fitness, martial arts, individual and dual "lifetime" sports, team sports, and outdoor education which are available for academic credit. Since P.E. is a requirement for undergraduates in Columbia College and the School of Engineering and Applied Science, priority is given to CC and SEAS students when registering for P.E. classes. If space is available, undergraduate General Studies students are permitted to take courses in the Physical Education academic credit program. The grading in all physical education courses is Pass/Fail. Students who fulfill the attendance and participation requirement receive a Pass.

Normally students may take only one P.E. course per semester; enrollment in more than one P.E. course per semester requires the approval of the Director of Physical Education Programs, to whom students should submit a petition. GS students may count up to two points of Physical Education toward the degree requirements.

### Dance Technique Courses

A maximum of six (6) points of dance technique courses may count to the degree for GS non-dance majors. GS students registering for a dance technique class must register for at least one point. GS students may not register for a 0-point dance technique class.

### Non-Degree Credit-bearing Courses

Certain courses will specify whether course credit may be applied to the degree. In cases where course credit may not count to the degree, students must ensure that they have sufficient credits towards the

Bachelor's Degree by the time they apply for graduation. For example: credit from **ECON GU 4995** Research Course does not count to the Columbia degree.