

GENERAL STUDIES

2020-2021 | Bulletin and Academic Policies

Academic policies are set by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the academic administration of individual schools within the Arts and Sciences. Students in the School of General Studies are expected to familiarize themselves with GS policies. Students seeking clarity on academic policies relevant to or beyond those stated on the GS website should consult with their respective GS advisors.

Spring 2021 Academic Updates

As in Fall 2020, students now taking a fully, or mostly, online semester are in a system of learning that is less than familiar to them — one that continues to require them to develop and practice new types of engagement in class, new strategies for learning with online materials, and new habits for work in remote locations. It is also a system of learning that can suffer interference from a variety of technical difficulties or limitations. In recognition of these current challenges, the CC-GS Committee on Instruction (COI) has approved some temporary modifications to certain academic policies for the Spring 2021 semester:

- Students will be able to elect the pass/d/fail option for one class this semester without restriction — i.e., the course chosen for this grading option can fulfill a requirement for the Core Curriculum; a requirement for a major, concentration, or special concentration; or an elective.
- The deadline for declaring the pass/d/fail option for a course will be extended to the last day of classes for the term (February 22 for Spring A courses; April 15 for full Spring and Spring B courses).
- The deadline to withdraw from a course will also be extended to the last day of classes for the term (February 22 for Spring A courses; April 15 for full Spring and Spring B courses). [Please note that there is no change to the [refund rate for withdrawals](#).]

The usual policy for lifting a “P” to uncover a grade will continue. Students will be able to see their assigned grade for the course in question in SSOL and decide by the end of the second week of the Fall 2021 semester (by September 17) whether to uncover the grade or let the “P” remain on the transcript permanently.

It is important to note that there are situations in which it may not be desirable or beneficial for students to use the pass/d/fail option for particular courses of study. The notation of a “P” on a transcript can be read differently by different audiences (within a department or program, within a school, by admissions programs of graduate and professional programs, by employers), and it is important for students to consider future plans when considering a decision that will affect their educational records. **Students are therefore strongly encouraged to speak with their academic advisers and their Directors of Undergraduate Studies before making the decision to use the pass/d/fail option, particularly for a class within a major or concentration or for a class that is required or may be important for graduate study.**

Fall 2020 Academic Updates

Overview

Faculty are actively engaged in preparations that will ensure the richest academic experience possible, in keeping with Columbia’s standards of excellence. We are enhancing the remote learning strategies that

were used at Columbia in the spring, and this will be a continuing priority throughout the duration of the summer.

Courses will be taught in-person, online, and in hybrid formats. Across all these modalities, the Columbia faculty will offer GS students a curriculum in the coming year that is engaging and responsive to your needs and interests.

Academic Calendar

Courses for the coming academic year will be spread across three semesters of equal length, allowing greater flexibility for faculty and students. To accomplish this, some classes originally planned for fall or spring will be moved to the summer term, and students will be able to make progress toward their degree during every term, including completing major, Core, and premedical certificate requirements.

The dates for the terms are as follows:

- Fall Term (September 8- December 23)
- Spring Term (January 11- April 26)
- Summer Term (Summer A: May 3- June 18, Summer B: June 28-Aug. 16)
- Commencement scheduled for the last week of April

Course offerings can be found in the [Bulletin](#), in the online [Directory of Courses](#), in [Vergil](#), and on department and program websites. Information about the format of each course (online, hybrid, or in-person) is also available in these resources.

Remote Learning

All Fall 2020 undergraduate courses (UN1xxx-UN3xxx) will be taught remotely. Graduate level courses (GU4xxx -GR9xxx) will be taught in a variety of modalities: online, hybrid, or in-person. Undergraduate students living in residence on campus or in commuting distance to campus are eligible to participate in the in-person elements of GU4xxx courses that will be taught in-person or in the hybrid mode. This guidance also applies to undergraduates who are given special permission to enroll in graduate-level courses at the GR5xxx level or higher.

Immersive Courses

Each of the Fall and Spring semesters has been further divided into two equal parts—Part A and Part B, with some departments and programs offering half-term immersive courses that students have the option to take in addition to their semester-long courses. The goal of these immersive classes is to allow for a depth of engagement and learning over a shorter and more intensive period of time. There is no requirement that you enroll in an immersive course, but it may be an option you wish to explore.

Shopping Period

In a typical semester, students have an opportunity at the beginning of each semester to visit classes for which they are not registered to help students decide if they would like to enroll. For Fall 2020, the shopping period will be online for all classes. Students can navigate to the Courseworks site for any course they would like to visit via Vergil. Through Courseworks, students will be able to find the Zoom links for courses they wish to visit.

Grading

After an abrupt and brief introduction to online courses in Spring 2020, students now taking a fully online semester are in a system of learning that is still less than familiar to them — one that continues to require them

to develop and practice new types of engagement in class, new strategies for learning with online materials, and new habits for work in remote locations. It is also a system of learning that can suffer interference from a variety of technical difficulties or limitations. In recognition of these current challenges, the CC-GS Committee on Instruction (COI) has approved some temporary modifications to certain academic policies for the Fall 2020 semester:

- Students will be able to elect the pass/d/fail option for one class this semester without restriction – *i.e.*, the course chosen for this grading option can fulfill a requirement for the Core Curriculum; a requirement for a major, concentration, or special concentration; or an elective.
- The deadline for declaring the pass/d/fail option for a course will be extended to the last day of classes for the term (December 14).
- Students who completed an immersive course in the “Fall A” term can choose to retroactively apply the pass/d/fail option to that course as their one pass/d/fail course for Fall 2020.
- The deadline to withdraw from a course will also be extended to the last day of classes for the term (December 14). [Please note that there is no change to the [refund rate for withdrawals](#).]

The usual policy for lifting a “P” to uncover a grade will continue. Students will be able to see their assigned grade for the course in question in SSOL and decide by the end of the second week of the Spring 2021 semester (by January 22) whether to uncover the grade or let the “P” remain on the transcript permanently.

The Core

The two year-long Core courses—Contemporary Civilization and Literature Humanities—will each continue to be offered in the usual Fall-then-Spring sequence. Most of the one-term Core courses—Art Humanities, University Writing, Music Humanities, and Frontiers of Science—will be offered in Fall, Spring, and Summer. Core classes will not be offered in an immersive (half-term) format.

New Courses

An unusual number of new courses will also be available in the coming year. Faculty are working to design innovative courses that respond to our unprecedented historical moment, and you will see new course offerings on topical issues in public health, social justice, electoral politics, and more. Over the course of the year, we will be highlighting new course offerings through the GS newsletters and social media.