

General Distribution Requirements

The general distribution requirements currently understood to be the “default” standard applicable to students enrolled in the Class of 2016 are as follows:

Language and Literature One course in English (ENGL 101) and one course in a foreign language at the 300 level.

The required course in English prepares students to become critical readers of significant literary works, to apply a variety of interpretive approaches, and to learn effective techniques for writing clear, correct, and persuasive English prose. The culminating 300-level course in a foreign language, either ancient or modern, is required so that all students may develop some insight into the way language itself works — which can often be seen best in a language not one’s own — and acquire some understanding of the literature and culture of another people. At the 300 level (the fourth semester, as languages are numbered here), a student should be able to read literary or cultural texts in the target language and, in the case of a modern foreign language, be capable of demonstrating facility in speaking the language in question.

Students who begin foreign-language study below the 300 level must complete each semester course in sequence before attempting a 300-level course (e.g., a student beginning in 104 must also pass 203 before taking a 300-level course). Exceptionally, however, a student could jump a level in the sequence via approval from the department in question, which must notify the Associate Dean of the College.

Mathematics, Computer Science, and the Natural Sciences One course in mathematics (or designated course in computer science) and two courses in the natural sciences.

Mathematics is essential to all systematic inquiry in the natural and social sciences and is a study that can return great intellectual and aesthetic satisfaction. The study of computer science likewise offers both practical benefits and ways of envisioning multiple models of reality. Students at Sewanee pursue mathematics and the natural sciences to gain an understanding of the methods involved in scientific work and an enhanced appreciation of the natural world. At least one of the two science courses must have a full laboratory. Labs meet for approximately the same number of hours as the lecture classes meet each week.

History and the Social Sciences One course in history (HIST 100) and one course in the social sciences.

Studying important historical themes is essential to a liberal arts education. The required history course introduces students to significant developments since classical antiquity. While it focuses primarily on the western tradition, attention is given to others. The course also introduces students to methods of approaching historical study. A course in anthropology, economics, or political science enables students to approach social issues and problems with specific tools and techniques. Their work may also examine ways in which modern social problems can be alleviated.

Philosophy and Religion One course in philosophy or religion.

Philosophy and religion are interrelated disciplines that examine the fundamental bases of human experience — the ways human beings think, form values, and conceive of human life and the cosmos. Introductory courses in philosophy and religion examine key ideas and texts from the Judeo-Christian and other traditions. One course at the introductory level in either discipline is required of all students to help them become more critical, more reflective, and more aware of transcendent values. This requirement also provides another perspective on moral and ethical problems discussed in complementary disciplines like English and history.

Art and Performing Arts One course in art, art history, music, or theatre.

The aesthetic disciplines offer different options for expression. Students are required to take one course focusing on artistic activities that draw on intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual resources. The course provides a framework for understanding how techniques relate to the history and theory of the medium.

Writing-Intensive Courses One course designated as writing-intensive as general distribution and a second in a major.

The ability to write clearly and effectively, like the ability to speak well, is a skill that comes through long practice with expert guidance. Each student must take at least one writing-intensive course during the freshman or sophomore year under the General Distribution rubric and must take another writing-intensive course that is offered in the student’s major as part of the major requirement. Such courses aim to sharpen the student’s skills through frequent writing assignments. They may include conferences with the instructor and opportunities to rewrite and revise assignments. The second writing-intensive course (in the major) should also expose students to conventions of writing and research expected in a given discipline. Sewanee graduates are thus trained to express themselves with clarity and precision.

Physical Education

Two courses (not counted among the thirty-two full academic courses required for graduation).

One of these must be completed by the end of the freshman year and the second by the end of the sophomore year.