

# THE HUMANITIES AND ARTS PROJECT REQUIREMENT

## A STUDENT GUIDE



## OVERVIEW

The Humanities and Arts Requirement empowers students to meet the broad educational goals of WPI. The balance between technological and humanistic education and the emphasis on inquiry-based approaches to learning are hallmarks of a WPI education. In concert with WPI's other degree requirements, the Humanities and Arts Requirement embodies the institute's definition of an educated person. The HUA Requirement engages students with theory and practice — *Lehr und Kunst* — through the following educational goals:

- To introduce students to the breadth, diversity, and creativity of human experience as expressed in the humanities and arts
- To develop students' ability to think critically and independently about the world
- To enhance students' ability to communicate effectively with others in a spirit of openness and cooperation
- To deepen students' ability to apply concepts and skills in a focused thematic area through sustained critical inquiry
- To encourage students to reflect on their responsibilities to others in local, national, and global communities
- To kindle in students a life-long interest in the humanities and arts
- To enrich students' understanding of themselves

### DEPTH

To ensure depth, students complete at least 3 courses of thematically-related work with at least one course at the 2000 level or above, followed by an Inquiry Seminar or Practicum (HU 3900, HU 3910, or equivalent) in that same thematic area. Thematically-related work can be achieved in three ways:

- Focusing on a single disciplinary area (art / art history; music; drama / theatre; literature / writing / rhetoric; history / international studies; philosophy / religion).
- Defining a thematic area across disciplines in consultation with the HUA faculty advisor teaching the Inquiry Seminar or Practicum.
- Taking 6 courses in either German or Spanish, and finishing with an advanced course constituting the equivalent of the Inquiry Seminar. (These courses are indicated in the course bulletin.)

## COMPLETING THE REQUIREMENT

Students meet the Humanities and Arts degree requirement by completing six courses, the last of which (the Inquiry Seminar or Practicum) involves an in-depth and usually independent project.

In selecting the five courses before the concluding project, students must complete breadth and depth components, detailed below.

Students are required to take a minimum of three classes in one thematically-related area (depth) and at least one class in a different area (breadth). You should begin by browsing the descriptions of Seminar and Practicum offerings on the HUA website, and speaking to the instructors about your plans for the HUA project. There are two good ways to plan a HUA project:

- You can experiment with a variety of courses until you find a topic or discipline that interests you and can become your project's focal point. You may use at least one and up to two courses outside of that area (see the groupings below) for your breadth requirement.
- You can take courses in a discipline or topic that interests you, and then take at least one other course outside of that thematically-related area. Ideally, this course will still relate in some way to your topic.

Once you have a general plan for your courses and your Seminar or Practicum, talk to the professor teaching the Seminar or Practicum and register for it as soon as you can.

### BREADTH

For the purposes of defining breadth, courses are gathered into five groupings. To ensure intellectual breadth, students must take at least one course outside the group in which they complete their depth component.

Art & Art History (AR)  
—  
Drama & Theatre (EN/TH)  
—  
Music (MU)

Literature (EN)  
—  
Writing & Rhetoric (WR, RH)

Spanish (SP)  
—  
German (GN)  
—  
Arabic (AB)  
—  
Chinese (CN)

History (HI)  
—  
International Studies (HU)

Philosophy (PY)  
—  
Religion (RE)

## THE CONCLUDING PROJECT

The culmination of the depth component of the HUA Requirement is an **Inquiry Seminar** or **Inquiry Practicum**. This course may be taken only after all 5 HUA courses have been completed. This culminating class is required for every HUA project, regardless of topic or discipline. Inquiry Seminars and Practicums require permission from the instructor; registration forms are available on the HUA website.

### INQUIRY SEMINAR (HU 3900)

As the capstone experience in the Humanities and Arts, the Inquiry Seminar is intended to help students direct their prior coursework and disciplinary training to the pursuit of an in-depth project. The purpose of the Inquiry Seminar, therefore, is not to provide a broad survey or general introduction to a discipline, but to provide a structured forum in which students might approach a specific humanistic problem or theme at a deeper, more sustained level of intellectual engagement than would normally be possible in a traditional course setting. The pedagogical idea behind the Inquiry Seminar is that work in the humanities is at once an intensely personal enterprise, in which the individual freely draws on her or his own particular interests, abilities, passions, and commitments, and at the same time a form of ethical community in which the practitioner is always in conversation with and accountable to others.

### INQUIRY PRACTICUM (HU 3910)

Students in the creative arts have the option to complete their Humanities and Arts sequence with an Inquiry Practicum in music, art, drama/theatre, music, or writing. A practicum shares the goals and objectives of an Inquiry Seminar but provides students with a production or performance experience emphasizing the hands-on, practical application of skills and knowledge gained from previous HUA courses.

Examples of practicums in music include composing, arranging, or performing in a solo recital. Drama/theatre students may choose to act in, direct, or design a campus production. Writing and art practicums invite other forms of creative projects. In addition to weekly meetings, students may be required to attend rehearsals and performances. The design of the final project is determined through conversations between instructors and students.

## HUA REQUIREMENT WORKSHEET

*Depth Component:* List at least 3 HUA courses in the same thematic area that you plan for your Inquiry Seminar or Practicum (see #1 and #3 below).

Course No.	Course Title	Instructor	Term / Year

*Breadth Component:* List at least 1 HUA course selected from a different group than the courses listed in the preceding table (see #2 below).

Course No.	Course Title	Instructor	Term / Year

*Concluding Project:* Identify an Inquiry Seminar or Practicum in your thematic area. Before you may take this final course, you must have completed 5 courses in HUA, as described below.

HU 3900/3910	Seminar / Practicum Title	Instructor	Term / Year

- At least 3 courses in a thematically-related area. At least 1 of these courses must be at the 2000 level or above. If unified by discipline, all 3 courses must belong to one of the following disciplinary groups:
  - Art / Art History
  - Music
  - Drama / Theatre
  - Literature / Writing / Rhetoric
  - History/ International Studies
  - Philosophy / Religion
- At least 1 course outside of the group in which your depth requirement belongs. The 5 groups for determining "breadth" are as follows:
  - Art/art history, drama/theatre, and music (AR, EN/TH, MU)
  - Foreign languages (SP, GN, AB, CN)
  - Literature and writing/rhetoric (EN, WR, RH)
  - History and international studies (HI, HU)
  - Philosophy and religion (PY, RE)
- One concluding seminar or practicum (HU 3900 or 3910) in the thematically-related area chosen for depth. Three courses plus Inquiry Seminar or Practicum in this area of focus fulfill the depth requirement



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- When should I start this project?

**Now!** But you don't have to drop everything to complete the HUA requirement. Most students start their HUA in their first year and finish in their sophomore year. You'll set a good pace if you take three HUA classes each year. You may complete the project any time before graduation, but it's a good idea to plan ahead, because the Seminar or Practicum you want might fill. As soon as you can, you should browse the descriptions of Inquiry Seminars and Practicums (published on the HUA website early in C term), choose two or three that interest you, and discuss your interests with the instructor of each Seminar or Practicum. Although these courses change slightly from one year to the next, you'll find a lot of consistency to help you plan.

- Do I have to complete the breadth requirement if I use a foreign language as my depth requirement?

**No.** Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, German, and ISE (English for Second Language learners) are exempt from the breadth requirement because foreign language instruction is broadly interdisciplinary and includes elements of the history, literature, and culture of a particular language area. You can simply take 6 foreign language courses culminating in an advanced course. The course catalog indicates which of these advanced courses satisfy the Inquiry Seminar requirement.

- Can I use a foreign language to fulfill my breadth requirement?

**Yes!** If you fulfill your depth requirement with a series of courses that do not involve foreign languages, you can use a foreign language to fulfill the breadth requirement.

- What is a GPS and will it help with my HUA project?

GPS stands for "**Great Problems Seminar**." The GPS is a first-year, two-term course that gives students hand-on experience understanding and solving current, real-world problems. Students taking these courses receive dual credit, which often includes general HUA credit that may count toward breadth.

- What are some examples of HUA projects?

**1** **Dan** came to WPI with one AP credit in French, took three literature courses and one American history course. After meeting the depth and breadth requirements, he took an Inquiry Seminar in "Textual Engineering," where he explored the rare book archives of WPI's Gordon Library and the American Antiquarian Society. He wrote a seminar paper about illustrations of the industrial revolution in 19th-century serial fiction.

**2** **Jen** had a passion for languages and decided to complete her HUA in German. She took a sequence of 6 German courses, the last of which counted as her Inquiry Seminar.

**3** **Adam** came to WPI with an interest in the events of the Arab Spring. He took 3 classes in Arabic language and culture and two classes in world history, followed by an Inquiry Seminar in World History. He wrote a paper comparing the events of the Arab Spring of 2011 with the European revolutions of 1848. He satisfied his requirement in this way, but remained interested in the Arab world —so much so that he decided to minor in history. After declaring his minor and selecting a faculty advisor, he traveled to WPI's HUA Project Center in Ifrane, Morocco in A term, where he took a unit of coursework and wrote a research paper, "Modes of Mobilization in the Arab Spring Uprisings."

- Where can I find a list of Inquiry Seminars and Practicums?

The **HUA website** has a list of current Inquiry Seminars and Practicums. This list is published annually toward the beginning of C term.



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August 2013