

# The Bachelor of Arts Degree and College Requirements

The primary degree Mount Holyoke confers is the bachelor of arts (A.B.) degree. The College also offers a master's degree and several dual-degree and certificate options (see the chapters on the Five College Consortium, and Other Degree and Certificate Programs).

## College Requirements

Students seeking a Mount Holyoke College A.B. pursue a rigorous, well-rounded course of study that includes work in the humanities, science and mathematics, and social sciences. The College's distribution requirement, designed to acquaint students with a wide range of knowledge, also encourages students to explore new areas of interest. All students are expected to develop both their verbal and quantitative abilities. They must also demonstrate fundamental skills in a foreign language, as well as awareness of multicultural perspectives.

### Credit Requirements: Cumulative, Residency, and Outside the Major

*Cumulative.* All students must complete 128 semester credits. A normal schedule is four 4-credit courses per semester, each course meeting from one to four times a week.

Toward the 128 credits required for graduation, students may apply a maximum of 16 credits of independent study and honors work.

Also, students who entered the College before September 2008 may apply one non-liberal arts course, for a maximum of 4 credits, to the 128 credits required for graduation. Students who entered the College in or after September 2008 may apply a maximum of 12 credits combined that are earned from Mount Holyoke curricular support courses (CUSP) and from any Mount Holyoke, Five College, or transferred non-liberal arts courses, whether taken before or after the student's matriculation at the College.

*Residency.* Sixty-four of those credits must be taken while at Mount Holyoke during the sophomore, junior, and senior years. During those years, students must be registered at Mount Holyoke for a minimum of four semesters.

*Outside the major.* At least 68 credits of the total of 128 required for the degree shall be earned from course work outside the major department, except in the case of interdisciplinary and double majors.

### Minimum G.P.A.

Students must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.00.

## The Distribution Requirement

A liberal arts education places at its center the content of humane learning and the spirit of systematic inquiry. Its ultimate subject is humanity: the works and acts of human beings and the multiple worlds we inhabit—of thought and art, of nature, community, and technology. It is an education that is evaluative, not merely factual and descriptive. It emphasizes critical judgment and respect for human achievement, educated awareness and reasoned discourse, disciplined inquiry, directed curiosity, clear and creative expression. It is also an education in discovery, an opportunity to explore the extent and diversity of human experience, locate oneself within that breadth, and cultivate one's own passions and talents.

To these ends, the Mount Holyoke curriculum strives to help its students develop a base of knowledge that is both broad and deep. Our curriculum divides itself into two broad sections: the major/minor and the general education, or distribution, requirement. In the major and, to a lesser extent, in the minor, students commit to one relatively narrow branch of study with sufficient depth to acquire expertise in its concerns, traditions, and literatures. By contrast, the distribution requirement provides an extended orientation to all of the College's resources, including, most importantly, its faculty. Mount Holyoke College asks each student to take courses from seven different disciplines of her choosing, distributed across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. For many students, this requirement leads to unexpected interests that blossom into major fields of study. Others discover interdisciplinary connections with their intended major that lead to unanticipated career paths, or encounter faculty members who become mentors.

The College's distribution requirement seeks to be minimalist without being trivial. Our intention is not to endow all students equally with a privileged set of academic skills, but to guide, and to welcome, each student into a community of intellectual citizens.

Students must complete courses within seven different disciplines selected from three curricular divisions: humanities, science and mathematics, and social sciences. These courses must carry at least 4 credits within one semester to fulfill a distribution requirement.

### *Group I—Humanities*

Three courses from three different disciplines are required from Group I, including at least one course from each of the following two subgroups.

- I-A. Arts, language and literature: art, classics, dance, English, film studies, French, German studies, Greek, Italian, Latin, music, Russian, Spanish, theatre arts, or an interdisciplinary course in arts and literature.
- I-B. History, philosophy, religion, or an interdisciplinary course in this area.

### *Group II—Science and Mathematics*

Two courses from two different disciplines are required from Group II, including at least one laboratory course in a natural or physical science.

- II-A. Mathematics, statistics, computer science, or an interdisciplinary course in this area.
- II-B. Natural and physical sciences: astronomy, biological sciences, chemistry, geology, physics, or an interdisciplinary course in the natural or physical sciences with lab.
- II-C. Natural and physical sciences: astronomy, chemistry, geology, physics, or an interdisciplinary course in the natural or physical sciences without lab.

### **Group III—Social Sciences**

Two courses from two different disciplines are required from Group III.

- III-A. Anthropology, economics, education, geography, politics, psychology, sociology, or an interdisciplinary course in the social sciences.

NOTE: Interdisciplinary and interdepartmental courses meet the distribution requirement in the category indicated for each such course. If a course is cross-listed between a department and an interdisciplinary program, it will meet distribution within the department.

*Students seeking to fulfill distribution requirements with courses taken at another institution must obtain approval from the appropriate department chair at Mount Holyoke on a permissions form. This form is available on the registrar's website at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/registrar/docs/registrar/permission.pdf>.*

*Language courses used to meet a student's language requirement may not also be used to meet distribution requirements. Independent study (295 and 395 courses) will not satisfy the distribution requirement.*

### **Foreign Language, Ancient or Modern**

A degree-seeking student at Mount Holyoke is expected to study a language other than English while matriculated at the College. She can satisfy the language requirement in a number of ways. Preferably by the end of the sophomore year she should either:

1. complete a formal two-semester elementary course sequence in a foreign language new to her or for which she has little or inadequate preparation. (The self-instructional and mentored language courses offered through the Five College Center for World Languages cannot be used to meet the Mount Holyoke language requirement.)
2. complete a designated one-semester foreign language course or foreign literature course taught in the foreign language at the intermediate level or above.

*Note: international students are not exempted automatically from the language requirement. However, any student whose first language is not English can satisfy the language requirement if:*

- she can document that she attended a secondary school for at least one year at which instruction was conducted in a language other than English.

- she can document that she attended a secondary school outside of the U.S. where the language of instruction was English, but she elected a language or literature course taught in her native language.
- she has an O-level, A-level, or GSCE language result (for students from India, this would be a Grade X or Grade XII) or has an official record of a college-level course in her native language.

If a student meets at least one of the criteria listed immediately above and wishes to be exempted from the language requirement, she must contact dean of international students Donna Van Handle (*dvanhand@mtholyoke.edu*), who will review the student's records and inform the registrar's office if she determines that the language requirement has been fulfilled.

This describes the foreign language requirement as in effect for students entering the College in or after September 2008. Students who entered the College in earlier years should consult the catalogue for their entrance year.

### **Multicultural Perspectives Course**

In keeping with the mission of the College, Mount Holyoke's Multicultural Perspectives Requirement encourages students to engage intellectually with the complexities of the world and its peoples. Students must complete one 4-credit course devoted primarily to the study of some aspect of:

- a) the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East; or
- b) peoples of color in Australia, Europe, or North America; or
- c) peoples in North America whose primary language is other than English.

The course must incorporate a diversity of perspectives. A student may fulfill this requirement at any time during her college career by completing an approved course in the subject of her choice (see the Key to Course Descriptions chapter). With the approval of the dean of studies, a course taken off-campus may be used to fulfill the requirement.

### **Physical Education**

Students should earn 6 physical education units by the end of the junior year, starting from the first year. Four units are required for sophomore transfer students; 2 units for junior transfer students. Physical education units are not academic credits and do not count toward the 128 academic credits required to graduate.

### **Major**

A student is required to declare her major in her sophomore year no later than the end of the eighth week of classes of the second semester. At that time, with the help of a faculty advisor, she will create a careful academic plan for the next two years. A student may change her major at any time, provided there is time to complete the program before graduation. A student's request to change her major shall be filed with the registrar.

*Departmental major.* Students must earn at least 32 credits in the major field. A minimum of 8 credits must be in advanced work at the 300 level. Students with single departmental majors must also complete the “outside the major” requirement. All students who declare a single department major must complete at least 68 credits (of the required 128 credits) in course work outside the major department.

*Interdisciplinary major.* Interdisciplinary majors can be declared in the following areas of study: African American and African studies, Asian studies, biochemistry, critical social thought, environmental studies, European studies, international relations, Latin American studies, medieval studies, neuroscience and behavior, psychology and education, and Romance languages and cultures.

Interdisciplinary majors are structured enough to emphasize the central theme of a topic of study, but flexible enough to allow for a range of interest within a given topic. Students must earn a minimum of 40 credits in the approved program. At least 12 credits must be at the 300 level, divided between two or more departments or programs. Students who declare one of these interdisciplinary majors or a special major automatically fulfill the “outside the major” requirement. Note: the ancient studies and gender studies majors are interdisciplinary in nature, but students in these majors do not automatically fulfill the “outside the major” requirement.

*Special major.* Students whose interests cross department lines in an area for which no interdisciplinary major exists may plan a special major incorporating work in two or more departments. Students must work closely with faculty advisors to create a plan that is academically and educationally rigorous. A written plan must be submitted to and endorsed by two members of the faculty and the dean of studies. The plan must be submitted no later than the end of the eighth week of classes of the second semester of the student’s junior year. Students must earn a minimum of 40 credits in the approved program. At least 20 credits must be at the 300 level, divided between two or more departments. Students who declare a special major or an interdisciplinary major automatically fulfill the “outside the major” requirement.

## Outside the Major

To ensure some depth and coherence of knowledge beyond a single major, each student is required, no later than the end of the eighth week of classes of the second semester of her junior year, to elect one of the following options:

- I. A minor, consisting of a minimum of 16 credits beyond the 100 level in a field or related fields outside the student’s major. Only one minor may be recorded on a transcript. The minor may take one of three forms.
  - A. A minor sponsored by a department or an interdisciplinary program (for example, classics, economics, gender studies, physics).
  - B. A freestanding minor or a certificate program, as listed in the *Bulletin & Course Catalogue*.
  - C. A special minor devised by a student in consultation with, and approved by, her academic advisor. Normally the minimum of four courses required are

drawn from two or more departments or programs, other than the student's major field. A special minor may not have a title identical with the name of an existing major.

## II. A second major.

Special majors and some interdisciplinary majors by definition fulfill the Outside the Major requirement.

No course used towards a student's major may be used towards her minor. A student's minor or certificate must be approved by a designated member or members of that department or program if any of the courses to be applied to it are done elsewhere, if it differs from requirements outlined in the catalogue, or if the proposed minor department or program so specifies.

### Requirement Completion

To receive a Mount Holyoke College degree, students must fulfill the requirements described above. Requests for individual variations from this curriculum must be made to the Academic Administrative Board. The petition is available on the Web at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/registrar/petition.html>.

A frequently asked question is whether a student may use a particular course to satisfy more than one degree requirement. The following chart provides a simplified reference in addressing that question:

Can a single course be used to fulfill the requirements of both:

- A major and a second major: No
- A major and a minor (regardless of whether departmental, interdisciplinary, Nexus, thematic, or special minor): No
- A major and a Five College certificate: Yes
- A minor and a Five College certificate: Yes
- The Multicultural Perspectives requirement and any other requirement: Yes
- Any distribution requirement and a major: Yes
- Any distribution requirement and a minor: Yes

### Academic Deficiencies

To enter the sophomore class, a student must pass at least 24 credits within two semesters; to enter the junior class, at least 56 credits within four semesters; and to enter the senior class, at least 92 credits within six semesters. Students with fewer than the required credits will ordinarily receive a warning on credits and may be reclassified. At the end of each semester, the Academic Administrative Board reviews the records of all degree-seeking, postbaccalaureate, or certificate students who do not meet these standards: those who complete substantially fewer than normal credits in one or more semesters, those whose cumulative or semester grade averages fall below 2.00, or those who are already on academic probation. The board may warn the student about her academic standing, place her on academic probation, suspend her for a semester or year, or require her to withdraw. See the Academic Regulations chapter for more information.

## Honors

The degree is awarded *cum laude* on the basis of a 3.50 cumulative average, *magna cum laude* on the basis of a 3.75 cumulative average, and *summa cum laude* on the basis of a 3.75 cumulative average and the completion of an exceptional honors thesis or project. Students who complete a satisfactory honors thesis or project will receive the degree *with honor* in the department in which the thesis was completed. Students who complete an excellent honors thesis or project will receive their degree *with high honor* in the department in which the thesis was completed. Those who graduate *summa cum laude* or *with high honor* in their major department are called Mary Lyon Scholars. Students in approximately the top 15 percent of the class at the end of sophomore year (with two years of work at Mount Holyoke) are designated Sarah Williston Scholars. Last year, 55 percent of the senior class graduated with some form of academic honor.

Recognition of academic excellence includes election to Phi Beta Kappa (the Mount Holyoke chapter was established in 1905); Sigma Xi, an honorary society for science students; and Sigma Iota Rho, an honorary society for international relations students.

## Awarding of Degrees

Mount Holyoke College confers degrees once a year at Commencement in May. A senior who does not complete requirements may be eligible to process with her class at the ceremony, provided that she confirms with the registrar's office that she will meet the requirements to do so. In this instance, she will not be awarded a diploma at Commencement.

## Graduation Rate

As per Public Law 101-542, The Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act, graduation rate information is available from the Office of Institutional Research.