

# UNDERGRADUATE LEARNING GOALS AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The undergraduate degree Mount Holyoke confers is the bachelor of arts (A.B.) degree. The College also offers the master of arts in teaching (M.A.T.) degree and several dual-degree and certificate options.

The undergraduate learning goals and degree requirements are detailed in this section. To receive a Mount Holyoke College bachelor of arts degree, students must fulfill all requirements described. Any request for individual variations from this curriculum must be made to the Academic Administrative Board; students initiate the request process by meeting with their academic dean.

The requirements for graduate degrees are detailed in the Professional and Graduate Education section of the catalog (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/PaGE>).

## Learning Goals of the Mount Holyoke Curriculum

By combining the proven strengths of a liberal arts education with the transformative power of experiential learning, the Mount Holyoke College liberal arts experience provides the best foundation for citizenship and career in a global world. Audacity, creativity, determination, excellence, leadership, and commitment to the common good are the hallmarks of a Mount Holyoke education. As the oldest continuing women's college in the world and one of the most diverse liberal arts colleges in the nation, Mount Holyoke produces analytical, confident, creative, and independent thinkers who make a difference in the world. Mount Holyoke offers its students a compelling invitation to embrace complexity, cultivate curiosity, and nourish habits of lifelong learning. Our students learn the diverse practices of social, ethical, personal, and environmental stewardship and responsibility. The Mount Holyoke curriculum is designed to encourage students to:

1. Think analytically and critically by questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence, and articulating well-reasoned arguments.
2. Acquire depth, methodological expertise, and historical understanding in a discipline.
3. Develop intellectual breadth through study across disciplines and different modes of inquiry.
4. Develop the ability to write and speak confidently and effectively.
5. Engage in artistic forms of expression.
6. Acquire quantitative and technological capabilities.
7. Develop skills in more than one language and engage with cultural communities other than their own.
8. Conduct independent or collaborative research incorporating diverse perspectives and skill sets.
9. Apply the liberal arts through experiential learning in work and community environments.
10. Learn practices of self-assessment and reflection for academic, personal, and career growth.

## College Requirements for the Bachelor of Arts Degree

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 encourages students to explore new areas of interest. Students must also demonstrate fundamental skills in a foreign language, as well as awareness of multicultural perspectives.

The College's graduation requirements for the A.B., as listed below, were revised by the faculty in 2014. They apply to all students graduating after May 2014 as long as they either entered the College after Fall 2011 or were active students in Spring 2014. Alumnae and other students who entered prior to Fall 2011 should consult the catalog applicable to their entrance year for requirement information.

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

*Cumulative.* Every student 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, a student may apply a maximum of:

- 16 credits of independent study and honors work.
- 12 credits earned from any combination of Mount Holyoke curricular support courses (CUSP) and Mount Holyoke, Five College, or transferred non-liberal arts courses, whether taken before or after the student's matriculation at the College.

Transfer credit limits are detailed with other transfer information in the Academic Regulations (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/academic-regulations>) section of the catalog.

*Residency.* Sixty-four of the 128 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. Courses taken through the Five-College Interchange during Fall and Spring semesters while at Mount Holyoke count towards the residency requirement.

*Outside the major.* At least 68 credits of the 128 required for the degree must be in courses outside the student's major field of study unless the student elects and completes a second major, a Special (interdisciplinary individually-designed) major, or a designated interdisciplinary major.

### Minimum G.P.A.

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

### A First-Year Seminar

All entering first-year students must complete a First-Year Seminar in their first semester at Mount Holyoke. Transfer students and Frances Perkins Scholars who enter with sophomore or junior standing are exempt from this requirement, although they may elect to take a First-Year Seminar particularly when one is offered at the 200-level in their entering semester.

The First-Year Seminar Program welcomes students to Mount Holyoke College, inviting them to join in the pleasure of an intellectually adventurous education in the liberal arts. In these small, discussion-based seminars, students work with faculty to achieve the first Learning Goal of the Mount Holyoke curriculum, which will form the foundation

for their education here: the ability to think analytically and critically by questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence, and articulating well-reasoned arguments. All first-year seminars are writing-intensive.

First-year seminars do not meet other graduation requirements and must be approved courses at Mount Holyoke. They are all offered under the FYSEM subject designation.

## Foreign Language, Ancient or Modern

Each student must complete one designated course in a language other than English.

In the case of a student whose first language is not English, an exemption may be granted by the Dean of Studies to those with at least one of the following:

- documented attendance at a secondary school for at least one year at which instruction was conducted in a language other than English.
- documented attendance at a secondary school outside of the U.S. where the language of instruction was English, but the student elected a language or literature course taught in the student's native language.
- an O-level, A-level, or GCSE language result (for students from India, this would be a Grade X or Grade XII) or an official record of satisfactory completion of a college-level language or literature course in the student's native language.

A course used to fulfill the language requirement may not also be used to fulfill a distribution requirement (e.g. Humanities), though it may be applied to any other requirement.

## Multicultural Perspectives

Each student must complete one 4-credit course designated as meeting the Multicultural Perspectives requirement. Mount Holyoke's Multicultural Perspectives Requirement encourages students to engage intellectually with the complexities of the world and its peoples. Multicultural Perspectives courses are devoted primarily to the study of some aspect of:

1. the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East; or
2. peoples of color in Australia, Europe, or North America; or
3. peoples in North America whose primary language is other than English.

The course must incorporate a diversity of perspectives.

With the approval of the dean of studies, a course taken off-campus may be used to fulfill this requirement.

## The Distribution Requirements

Every student must complete one designated course in each of these three curricular divisions:

- Division I: Humanities
- Division II: Science and Mathematics
- Division III: Social Sciences

These courses must carry at least 4 credits within one semester and be designated as fulfilling the distribution requirement.

A course used by a student to fulfill any distribution requirement may not also be used to fulfill the language requirement, though it may be applied to any other requirement.

Independent study (295 and 395 courses) will not satisfy any distribution requirement.

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 (<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/sites/default/files/registrar/docs/permission.pdf>).

## Physical Education

Students must earn 4 physical education units. These are expected to be completed within the student's first four semesters at the College. Students admitted as transfer students or as Frances Perkins Scholars need only complete 2 physical education units at Mount Holyoke. Physical education units are not academic credits and do not count toward the 128 academic credits required to graduate.

## The Major

Every student must complete a major. Each student must declare their major in the 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, the student will create a careful academic plan for the next two years. Students declaring Special (self-designed majors) have one additional year beyond the usual deadline to finalize their written plan, as noted below. A student may file a change of major request with the Registrar at any time, provided there is time to complete the program before graduation.

The major may be of any of these three types:

- *Departmental Major*. Departmental majors require at least 32 credits in the major field, including a minimum of 8 credits in advanced work at the 300 level. Students with single departmental majors must also complete the "outside the major" requirement, so must complete at least 68 credits in course work outside their major field of study.
- *Interdisciplinary Major*. Interdisciplinary majors can be declared in the following areas of study: Africana studies, biochemistry, classics, critical social thought, environmental studies, East Asian studies, international relations, Latin American studies, Middle Eastern studies, neuroscience and behavior, psychology and education, Romance languages and cultures, Russian and Eurasian studies, and South Asian studies. 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. Their requirements include 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 automatically fulfill the "outside the major" requirement.

Current majors offered by the College are included on the Areas of Study list (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study>).

## Additional Options

Students may also elect – but are not required – to complete any number (or none) of the following:

- a second major or a minor (but not both a second major and a minor),
- a Five College certificate, and/or
- a Nexus program.

No course used to fulfill a requirement in a student's major may also be used to fulfill a requirement of the student's minor, though a course may be applied to a minor and a certificate and/or a Nexus.

The specific requirements of each minor, Nexus program, and certificate are detailed in this catalog. Current minors, Nexus programs, and certificates offered by the College are included on the Areas of Study list (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study>).

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 catalog, or if the proposed minor department or program so specifies.

## Applying a Single Course to Multiple Requirements

A frequently asked question is whether a student may use a particular course to satisfy more than one degree requirement – that is, to "double-count" a course towards two or more requirements. The answers below address the many variations of the question: "Can a single course be used to fulfill the requirements of both..."

- The First-Year Seminar requirement and any other requirement: No
- Any major and any second major: No
- Any major and any minor: No
- Any major or minor and any Nexus or Five College certificate: Yes
- The Multicultural Perspectives requirement and any other requirement: Yes
- Any distribution requirement (Humanities, Science & Mathematics, Social Sciences) and any requirement other than the language or first-year seminar requirement: Yes
- The language requirement and a distribution requirement (e.g. the Humanities requirement): No
- The language requirement and any major, minor, certificate, or Nexus requirement: Yes

## Awarding of Degrees

Each candidate for graduation is personally responsible for obtaining clearance for graduation from the registrar. Also, all graduating students should be sure to meet all required financial obligations to the College as prescribed by Student Financial Services, to ensure eligibility to receive

Commencement tickets, their diplomas, and continued access to official transcripts.

Mount Holyoke College confers degrees three times per year: on dates in October, March, and during the annual Commencement ceremony in May. Students completing all degree requirements and having their degrees conferred in May, as well as those whose degrees were conferred the preceding October or March, are invited to participate in the May Commencement ceremony – unless they had participated, through exception criteria, in the previous May's ceremony.

The exception criteria allow undergraduate seniors to apply to participate fully in Commencement exercises before their actual degree conferral if they have completed at least 120 credits towards the Mount Holyoke degree (108 if they had been a spring admit) and have a solid plan, approved by the Registrar, for completing their remaining requirements. There is a formal application process to apply for early participation in Commencement. Students interested in participating through this exception route in lieu of participating after they have completed all degree requirements should contact the Registrar's Office in the winter of their senior year for application procedures. If approved, these students will robe, process into the Commencement ceremonies and sit with the graduating students, have their names called and cross the stage individually like the graduating students, though they will neither actually graduate on that date nor receive their diplomas. These students are then ineligible to participate at all in the following year's Commencement and Commencement weekend activities, since they participated in the year before. No student can participate in the Commencement ceremony or any degree conferral if they are currently suspended or withdrawn from the College.

## 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, 65 percent of the senior class graduated with some form of academic honor.

Recognition of academic excellence may include election to the following honorary societies: Phi Beta Kappa for excellence in the liberal arts and sciences (the Mount Holyoke chapter was established in 1905); Sigma Xi for noteworthy achievement as original investigators in science; Sigma Iota Rho for scholarship and service in international relations; Sigma Pi Sigma for outstanding scholarship in Physics; and Delta Phi Alpha for excellence in the study of German.

## 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 (<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/iresearch>).