



University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

NEWS RELEASE

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UW-Eau Claire launches new liberal studies degree and major

RELEASED: Dec. 16, 2009

EAU CLAIRE — Beginning with the fall 2009 semester, the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire will offer a major in liberal studies.

The innovative academic program will allow students to design an interdisciplinary major around a theme of the student's choosing in consultation with an adviser, said Dr. Margaret Cassidy, associate dean for academic affairs and curriculum in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The new degree program also will provide a framework for pursuing the liberal education knowledge and skills that are essential in many careers and graduate education today, such as written and verbal communication, analysis and problem solving, teamwork and collaborative abilities, Cassidy said, noting the program will emphasize cross-disciplinary understandings.

Students can learn more about liberal studies and begin planning their academic future by enrolling in LS 201, Introductory Liberal Studies Seminar, which will be offered online during Winterim 2010 and on-campus during the spring 2010 semester.

"Given the breadth and flexibility of the liberal studies comprehensive major, varying groups of students are likely to be interested, including transfer students wishing to integrate transfer and resident credits into a coherent degree program and nontraditional students seeking to complete a bachelor's degree," Cassidy said.

Students with multiple academic interests can incorporate and explore a greater breadth of disciplines within one major, minimizing the need to switch academic programs and accumulate excess degree credits, said Dr. Johannes Strohschänk, chair of the Liberal Studies Steering Committee.

"This way, widespread interests and a thirst for a broader horizon of knowledge are rewarded as they correspond with the growing understanding among intellectual communities worldwide that discipline-based silos have not been communicating sufficiently among each other and that many of today's problems can be solved most effectively through an interdisciplinary, holistic approach," Strohschänk said.

Composed of 60 credits, the major will allow students to choose three interrelated areas of concentration (17 credits each; 51 credits total) that, when linked, will reflect a coherent theme, Cassidy said.

For example, a student may want to explore different aspects of work through a cluster of courses in history, sociology, English and philosophy, Cassidy said. Environmental inquiries dealing with drinking water may be addressed through courses in chemistry, geography, political science and history, she said. A third interdisciplinary cluster could revolve around a particular geographical area such as Asia, where a student would take language courses in Chinese or Japanese, complemented by studies in the area's history, geography or culture, Strohschänk said.

"The possibilities are extensive and exciting," Cassidy said. "This program will interest many of our current and future students."

The remaining nine credits in the major are devoted to the introductory seminar, a research seminar and a capstone seminar.

Courses in the major will be drawn primarily from the College of Arts and Sciences and include at least 21 upper-division credits, Cassidy said.

Liberal studies majors will complete the requirements associated with the bachelor of liberal studies degree.

"Liberal studies students will experience a broad approach to knowledge and learning by pursuing three areas of concentration instead of the usual two (standard major and a minor), as well as enlightening and academically rigorous course work that challenges them through extensive reading, writing, analysis and thorough reflection," Strohschänk said.

Students pursuing the major will benefit from working closely with an academic adviser and gaining feedback on their individually designed major from the Liberal Studies Steering Committee, Cassidy said.

For details about the liberal studies major and bachelor of liberal studies degree, see the change of major information at www.uwec.edu/registrar/ChgofMajor/procedures/libStd.htm; the 2009-10 University Catalog at www.uwec.edu/registrar/catalogues/index.htm; or call the College of Arts and Sciences at 715-836-2025.