Liberal Studies

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Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

The Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) program is designed for students who possess a strong desire for intellectual growth and challenge and an interest in interdisciplinary research. It offers students individualized programs of graduate study that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries and yet lie squarely within the venerable tradition of liberal education.

The MALS curriculum includes three sets of activities:

1. Students take a least three **Great Ideas Seminars**, in which they study the books, theories, and discoveries that have had the greatest impact on the humanities, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.
2. Students completing the Liberal Studies standard curriculum undertake an **Interdisciplinary Concentration** consisting of at least six courses spanning three different disciplines unified by a theme chosen by the student in consultation with an advisor. Students completing the Philosophy track of the standard curriculum must complete at least six courses in philosophy. Courses should be chosen by the student in consultation with an advisor.
3. Students complete a **Capstone Project** – either a **Master's Thesis** or a shorter **Master's Essay** – on a topic related to the unifying theme of their Interdisciplinary Concentration.

Unlike many graduate programs in Liberal Studies, which have no departmental "home," the MALS program at FIU is housed in the **Department of Philosophy,** whose members (listed above) have responsibility for coordinating the program, teaching and arranging guest lecturers for the Great Ideas Seminars, helping students develop their Interdisciplinary Concentrations, and ensuring that Capstone Projects are supervised by appropriate experts.

Degree Requirements: Standard Curriculum

Thirty-three semester credit hours of course work and a cumulative GPA of 3.0 are required for the MALS degree.

Great Ideas Seminars*	9
Interdisciplinary Concentration*	18
Master's Essay or Master's Thesis	3 or 6

*33 hours are required of all MALS students.

Students who receive 3 hours for a Master's Essay instead of 6 hours for a Master's Thesis must complete either four Great Ideas Seminars (12 hours) or a 21 hour Interdisciplinary Concentration.

Degree Requirements: Philosophy Track

Thirty-three semester credit hours of course work and a cumulative GPA of 3.0 are required for the MALS degree.

Great Ideas Seminars*	9
Graduate Coursework in Philosophy Concentration*	18
Master's Essay or Master's Thesis	3 or 6

*33 hours are required of all MALS students.

Students who receive 3 hours for a Master's Essay instead of 6 hours for a Master's Thesis must complete either four Great Ideas Seminars (12 hours) or a 21 hour Interdisciplinary Concentration.

A prospective MALS student may have already completed some graduate level courses either at FIU or elsewhere. Such graduate work may count towards the MALS degree and in particular towards the student's Interdisciplinary Concentration if the following conditions are satisfied.

1. The student received a grade of "B" or better in those courses.
2. Those courses are approved by the student's advisor and the Graduate Program Director. To obtain such approval, the courses must be appropriately related to the theme unifying the student's Interdisciplinary Concentration.
3. No more than six graduate semester hours can be transferred from another university.

Admission Requirements

To be admitted into the MALS program, a student must:

1. Hold a Bachelor's Degree from an accredited college or university;
2. Have a grade point average of 3.0 or better in upper-level work;
3. International graduate student applicants whose native language is not English are required to submit a score for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). A total score of 80 on the iBT TOEFL or 6.5 overall on the IELTS is required;
4. Submit a substantial writing sample that is judged by the MALS admissions committee to be of satisfactory quality;
5. Interview with the Director of the Program;
6. Submit a personal statement of academic purpose explaining the reasons the applicant has chosen to apply to the program, and indicating how the program will meet his/hers educational goals and experiences;
7. Submit two or three letters of recommendation that describe academic ability and motivation;
8. Submit a curriculum vita explaining academic background, professional, volunteer services and relevant experience.

Combined BA/MA in Liberal Studies

The combined (4+1) Bachelor/Master of Arts in Liberal Studies offers outstanding undergraduate FIU students in Liberal Studies as well as in majors such as Philosophy the opportunity to earn a Masters degree in only one additional year beyond the BA degree.

The (4+1) program represents two distinct options:

1. Liberal Studies to MALS. This option allows students to complement the undergraduate major with

graduate study in the same discipline as the undergraduate study.

2. Other majors such as Philosophy to MALS. This option allows students to complement the undergraduate major with graduate study in another area.

The goal is to attract outstanding students into the combined program so that they formally apply to the program in the first semester of their senior year (i.e., when they have completed 90 credit hours.) Interested students should speak with the undergraduate advisor as early as possible because careful selection of undergraduate courses in the sophomore and junior years will be essential for admission to the program.

To be considered for admission to the combined bachelor's/master's degree program, students must have completed at least 75-90 credits in the bachelor's degree program at FIU and meet the admissions criteria for the graduate degree program to which they are applying. Students need only apply once to the combined degree program, but the application must be submitted to Graduate Admissions before the student starts the last 30 credits of the bachelor's degree program. A student admitted to the combined degree program will be considered to have undergraduate status until the student applies for graduation from their bachelor's degree program. Upon conferral of the bachelor's degree, the student will be granted graduate status and be eligible for graduate assistantships. Only 5000-level or higher courses, and no more than the number of credits specified by the program catalog, may be applied toward both degrees.

Applicants to the accelerated program need a GPA of 3.20. Formal admission to the accelerated program is usually in the first semester of the senior year. Students would be also required to maintain a GPA of at least 3.20 to remain in the program. Participation in this program allows the students to fulfill some graduate program requirements during their senior year. More specifically, students at the senior level may be allowed to earn up to 9 graduate credits that will count towards their MALS degree. Up to 3 graduate courses (9 credits) may be used to satisfy both the Bachelor and Masters degree requirements. All double counted courses must be at the 5000 level of higher. Courses to be allowed to be double counted must be approved by MALS. Before starting the graduate program students must have satisfied all general education and core requirements.

The curriculum for the (4+1) MALS will meet criteria identical to those of the MALS program. A student will not be eligible for assistantship funding before completing all requirements for the Bachelors degree. For the double counted courses, students must, in consultation with their graduate program advisor, approve that the student is taking the course for graduate credit. Graduates and undergraduates may have different workloads and grading criteria. The student must earn a grade of "B" or better for these courses to count towards the Masters requirements.

Admission Requirements

(1) Current enrollment in a bachelors degree in Philosophy or Liberal Studies.
(2) Completed at least 75-90 credits hours of coursework.
(3) Current GPA of a 3.25 or higher.
(4) Application to the Department to enroll in the (4+1) MALS program that will include
  (a) Three letters of recommendation
  (b) Personal statement [2-3 pages] describing goals and objectives in seeking a combined accelerated degree
  (c) A 8-25 pages writing sample of satisfactory quality
(5) On-line application to the University Graduate School for admission to the MALS program.
(6) Positive evaluation by the undergraduate program director.
(7) Approval of the graduate admissions committee.
(8) In addition to the admission requirements of the (4+1) MALS program, students must meet all the admission requirements of the University Graduate School.

Completion Requirements

(1) Completion of both the required courses for the BA (33 credits and the required courses for the MALS (33 credits).
  (a) For the Liberal Studies-to-MALS option, either the 3 Great Ideas Seminars or 3 – 5000 or 6000 level courses in Natural Sciences, Humanities or Social Sciences may be used to satisfy both the Bachelors and Masters degree.
  (b) For other majors such as the Philosophy-to-MALS option, either 3 Great Ideas Seminars or 3 – 5000 or 6000 level courses in Natural Sciences, Humanities or Social Sciences may be used to satisfy both the Bachelors and Masters degree.
(2) The bachelor's degree must be awarded when the student completes the requirements for the degree. In other words, the bachelor's degree must be awarded before the master's degree.
(3) Students in the (4+1) MALS program have up to one year to complete the Master's degree after receipt of the bachelor's degree.
(4) Students who fail to meet the one year post BA requirement or who elect to leave the (4+1) MALS program at any time and earn only the BA degree will have the same access requirements to regular graduate program as any other student, but will not be able to use the 9 credits in both the bachelor's and the master's degrees.

Summary of Degree Requirements

Great Ideas Seminars:	9 hours (minimum*)
Interdisciplinary Concentration:	18 hours (minimum*)
Master's Essay or Master's Thesis:	3 hours or 6 hours
Total Hours:	**33 hours (minimum*)**

*33 hours of coursework are required of all (4+1) MALS students. However, a maximum of 3 hours is awarded for the "Master's Essay" course as opposed to 6 hours for "Master's Thesis" course. Students who choose the Essay option must complete either 4 Great Ideas Seminars or a 21 hour Interdisciplinary Concentration.

Course Descriptions

Definition of Prefixes

IDS – Interdisciplinary Studies.
F-Fall semester offering; S-Spring semester offering

IDS 6931 Great Ideas Seminar: The Age of Science (3). Great ideas from the natural sciences. Study of the historical development, the evidential basis, and the broader implications of those ideas. Reflection on the nature and methods of modern science. Prerequisite: Graduate standing.

IDS 6937 Great Ideas Seminar: Special Topics (3). Intensive interdisciplinary investigation of a single great idea such as natural selection or infinity. Study of that idea's cross-disciplinary development, its impact, and its uses and misuses. Prerequisite: Graduate standing.

IDS 6938 Great Ideas Seminar: Human Nature (3). Great religious, philosophical, and scientific ideas about human nature. Discussion of the view that human beings have no nature. Study of such thinkers as Confucius, Plato, Darwin, Freud, Skinner, and Sartre. Prerequisite: Graduate standing.

IDS 6939 Great Ideas Seminar: Politics and Society (3). Great ideas in political and social thought from Plato to the present. Topics include political obligation, the nature of the state, social and economic justice, social contract, liberty, the rule of law, and community. Prerequisite: Graduate standing.

IDS 6972 Master's Essay (1-3). For students working on a master's essay. Oral presentation required. Prerequisite: All other coursework for the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Degree.

IDS 6973 Master's Thesis (1-6). For students working on a master's thesis. Prerequisites: Graduate standing and permission of the instructor.