

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.

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.