

# IV

GENERAL REGULATIONS

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS



# General Regulations

## TERMS AND VACATIONS

THE COLLEGE year 2008-09 includes two regular semesters, the first with 13 weeks and the second with 14 weeks of classes. In the fall semester is an October break and a Thanksgiving recess. After the winter recess, there is a January Interterm. In the spring semester there is a vacation of one week.

All official College vacations and holidays are announced on the College Calendar appearing at the beginning of this catalog.

The January Interterm is a three-week period between semesters free from the formal structures of regular classes, grades, and academic credit. It is, in essence, a time when each student may undertake independent study in a subject or area to which he or she might not have access during the normal course of the year.

Students may center their activities on the campus or elsewhere as they choose. They may read, write, paint, compose, or inquire into some question or concern as inclination, ingenuity, and resources permit. They may wish to explore further or more deeply a subject which has aroused their curiosity or about which they wish to know more.

## CONDUCT

It is the belief of Amherst College that those engaged in education should be responsible for setting, maintaining, and supporting moral and intellectual standards. Those standards are assumed to be ones which will reflect credit on the College, its students, and its guests.

The College reserves the right to exclude at any time students whose conduct or academic standing it regards as unsatisfactory; in such cases fees are not refunded or remitted in whole or in part, and neither the College nor any of its officers consider themselves to be under any liability whatsoever for such exclusion.

All are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the principles set forth in the following three statements, which together comprise the Amherst College Honor Code. Failure to do so may in serious instances jeopardize the student's continued association with the College.

### A. STATEMENT OF INTELLECTUAL RESPONSIBILITY AT AMHERST COLLEGE

#### *Preamble*

Every person's education is the product of his or her own intellectual effort and participation in a process of critical exchange. Amherst cannot educate those who are unwilling to submit their own work and ideas to critical assessment. Nor can it tolerate those who interfere with the participation of others in the critical process. Therefore, the College considers it a violation of the requirements of intellectual responsibility to submit work that is not one's own or otherwise to subvert the conditions under which academic work is performed by oneself or by others.

#### *Article I Student Responsibility*

Section 1. In undertaking studies at Amherst College every student agrees to abide by the above statement.

Section 2. Students shall receive a copy of the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility with their initial course schedule at the beginning of each semester. It is the responsibility of each student to read and understand this Statement and to inquire as to its implications in his or her specific courses.

Section 3. Orderly and honorable conduct of examinations is the individual and collective responsibility of the students concerned in accordance with the above Statement and Article II, Section 3, below.

#### *Article II Faculty Responsibility*

Section 1. Promotion of the aims of the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility is a general responsibility of the Faculty.

Section 2. Every member of the Faculty has a specific responsibility to explain the implications of the statement for each of his or her courses, including a specification of the conditions under which academic work in those courses is to be performed. At the beginning of each semester all members of the Faculty will receive with their initial class lists a copy of the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility and a reminder of their duty to explain its implications in each course.

Section 3. Examinations shall not be proctored unless an instructor judges that the integrity of the assessment process is clearly threatened. An instructor may be present at examinations at appropriate times to answer questions.

#### B. STATEMENT ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND DISSENT

Amherst College prizes and defends freedom of speech and dissent. It affirms the right of teachers and students to teach and learn, free from coercive force and intimidation and subject only to the constraints of reasoned discourse and peaceful conduct. It also recognizes that such freedoms and rights entail responsibility for one's actions. Thus the College assures and protects the rights of its members to express their views so long as there is neither use nor threat of force nor interference with the rights of others to express their views. The College considers disruption of classes (whether, for example, by the abridgment of free expression in a class or by obstructing access to the place in which the class normally meets) or of other academic activity to be a serious offense that damages the integrity of an academic institution.

#### C. STATEMENT ON RESPECT FOR PERSONS

Respect for the rights, dignity and integrity of others is essential for the well-being of a community. Actions by any person that do not reflect such respect for others are damaging to each member of the community and hence damaging to Amherst College. Each member of the community should be free from interference, intimidation or disparagement in the work place, the classroom and the social, recreational and residential environment.

#### *Harassment*

Amherst College does not condone harassment of any kind, against any group or individual, because of race, religion, ethnic identification, age, handicap, gender or sexual orientation. Such harassment is clearly in conflict with the interests of the College as an educational community and in many cases with provisions of law.

*Sexual Harassment*

Amherst College is committed to establishing and maintaining an environment free of all forms of harassment. Sexual harassment breaches the trust that is expected and required in order for members of an educational community to be free to learn and work. It is a form of discrimination because it unjustly deprives a person of equal treatment. Sexual harassment can injure anyone who is subjected to it, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

The College's policy on sexual harassment is directed towards behavior and does not purport to regulate beliefs, attitudes, or feelings. It is based on federal and state law, which prohibit certain specific forms of sexual harassment; on the College's Statement on Respect for Persons, which requires that a person's sex and sexual orientation be treated with respect; and on the following statement on sexual harassment passed by the Faculty on May 23, 1985:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when: (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, academic work, or participation in social or extracurricular activities; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for decisions affecting the individual; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or demeaning working, academic or social environment.

The College believes that sexual harassment, besides being intrinsically harmful and illegal, also corrupts the integrity of the educational process.

Because it is possible for one person to act unintentionally in a manner that sexually harasses another, it is imperative that all members of the College community understand what kinds of behavior constitute sexual harassment. Hence, we provide here a general description of sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment occurs when one person attempts to coerce another into a sexual relationship, or to punish a refusal to respond to or comply with sexual advances. Attempts to subject a person to unwanted attention of a sexual character, sexual slurs or derogatory language directed at another person's sexuality or gender also can be forms of sexual harassment. Thus, sexual harassment can include a wide range of behavior, from the actual coercing of sexual relations to the forcing of sexual attentions, verbal or physical, on a non-consenting individual. It is also possible that sexual harassment can occur unintentionally when behavior of a sexual nature has the effect of creating a hostile environment. In some cases, sexual harassment is obvious and may involve an overt action, a threat, or reprisal. In other instances, sexual harassment is subtle and indirect, with a coercive aspect that is unstated.

Sexual harassment also occurs when a position of authority is used to threaten the imposition of penalty or the withholding of benefit unless sexual favors are granted, whether or not the threat is carried out. Sexual harassment, when it exploits the authority the institution gives its employees, or otherwise compromises the boundary between personal and professional roles, is an abuse of the power the College entrusts to them. The potential for sexual harassment exists in any sexual relationship between a student and a member of the faculty, administration or staff. Anyone in a position of authority should thoroughly understand the potential for coercion in sexual relationships between persons who are professionally affiliated. These relationships may involve persons in a position of authority over their colleagues (e.g., tenured faculty and non-tenured

faculty; administrators and staff); or they may involve those who teach, advise or supervise students.

Sexual harassment also takes the form of unwanted attention among peers. Sexual harassment by peers may have the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or demeaning environment. Sexual harassment by peers can occur between strangers, casual acquaintances, hall-mates, and even friends.

Because sexual harassment is a direct violation of the College's "Statement on Respect for Persons," Amherst College will seriously and thoroughly investigate any complaints of sexual harassment and will discipline those found guilty. Any student who believes she or he may be the victim of sexual harassment by a member of the faculty should consult the section on "Seeking Redress in Cases of Sexual Harassment" and "The Resolution of Student Grievances with Members of the Faculty or Administration" in the *Student Handbook*. The *Faculty Handbook* gives further information about grievance procedures. Any student who believes she or he may be the victim of sexual harassment by a peer should consult the student-student grievance procedures in the *Student Handbook*.

#### *Consensual Sexual Relationships Between Faculty Members and Students*

Experience has shown that consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students can lead to harassment. Faculty members should understand the potential for coercion in sexual relationships with students with whom the faculty members also have instructional, advisory or supervisory relationships.

Even when such relationships do not lead to harassment, they can compromise the integrity of the educational process. The objectivity of evaluations which occur in making recommendations or assigning grades, honors, and fellowships may be called into question when a faculty member involved in those functions has or has had a sexual relationship with a student.

For these reasons, the College does not condone and, in fact, strongly discourages consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students. The College requires a faculty member to remove himself or herself from any supervisory, evaluative, advisory, or other pedagogical role involving a student with whom he or she has had or currently has a sexual relationship. Since the absence of this person may deprive the student of educational, advising, or career opportunities, both parties should be mindful of the potential costs to the student before entering into a sexual relationship.

In cases in which it proves necessary, the Dean of Faculty, in consultation with the Dean of Students and the Chair (or Head) of the relevant department, will evaluate the student's situation and take measures to prevent deprivation of educational and advising opportunities. The appropriate officers of the College will have the authority to make exceptions to normal academic rules and policies that are warranted by the circumstances.

#### ATTENDANCE AT COLLEGE EXERCISES

It is assumed that students will make the most of the educational opportunities available by regularly attending classes and laboratory periods. At the beginning of the semester, all instructors are free to state the policy with regard to absences from their courses. Thereafter, they may take such action as they deem appropriate, or report to the Dean of Students the names of any students who disregard the regulations announced.

Students are asked to notify the Office of the Dean of Students if they have been delayed at home by illness or family emergencies. They are also requested

to report any unusual or unexplained absences from the College on the part of any fellow students.

Students who have been attended at home by a physician should, on the day of their return, report their absence to the Office of the Dean of Students and submit a statement concerning their illness and any recommended treatment to the Student Health Office. Students who are ill at College will normally be attended at the College Health Service or will be referred to the University of Massachusetts Infirmary by the Staff Physician. It is assumed that all students not excused by the College physician are well enough to attend their regular classes.

The responsibility for any work missed due to an illness or other absence rests entirely upon the student.

Details about student health and medical programs are provided in the *Student Handbook*.

## RECORDS AND REPORTS

Grades in courses are reported in three categories:

Passing Grades = A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, Pass

Failing Grade = F

Term averages and cumulative averages are reported on a 14-point scale rounded to the nearer whole number. The conversion equivalents are: A+ = 14, A = 13, A- = 12; B+ = 11, B = 10, B- = 9; C+ = 8, C = 7, C- = 6; D = 4, F = 1. A Pass does not affect a student's average.

Grade reports for D and F grades only will be sent to students after the end of the seventh week of classes each semester. A report of all grades and averages will be sent to each student at the end of each semester.

The academic records and averages of Amherst College students completing Five College Interchange courses at Hampshire, Mount Holyoke and Smith Colleges, and the University of Massachusetts will include these courses and grades; no separate transcripts are maintained at the other institutions for Amherst College students.

"Rank in class" will not be used, but transcripts and grade reports will be accompanied by a profile showing the distribution of cumulative averages for students of the same class level in the current and in the previous two years.

Student academic records are maintained by the Registrar's Office and are confidential; information is released only at the request of the student. Partial transcripts are not issued; each transcript must include the student's complete record at Amherst College to date. An official transcript carries an authorized signature as well as the embossed seal of Amherst College.

Transcripts of credit earned at other institutions, which have been presented to Amherst College for admission or transfer of credit, become a part of the student's permanent record but are not issued, reissued, or copied for distribution. With the exception of Five College Interchange courses, grades for courses that were transferred from other institutions are not recorded; credit only is listed on the Amherst transcript. Transcripts for all academic work at other institutions of higher education, including summer schools, should be requested directly from those institutions.

## PASS/FAIL OPTION

Amherst College students may choose, with the permission of the instructor, a pass/fail arrangement in two of the 32 courses required for the degree, but not in more than one course in any one semester. The choice of a pass/fail

alternative must be made within 14 days after the beginning of the semester and must have the approval of the student's advisor. No grade-point equivalent will be assigned to a "Pass," but courses taken on this basis will receive either a "P" or an "F" from the instructor, although in the regular evaluation of work done during the semester the instructor may choose to assign the usual grades for work submitted by students exercising this option. First-year students, who have the privilege of withdrawing from one course without grade penalty, and transfer students, who have the privilege of withdrawing from one course during their first semester at Amherst, must take no less than three graded courses in each semester.

### EXAMINATIONS AND EXTENSIONS

Examinations are held at the end of each semester and at intervals in the year in many courses. At the end of each semester, final grades are reported and the record for the semester is closed. In conformity with the practice established by the Faculty, no extension of time is allowed for intraterm papers, examinations and incomplete laboratory or other course work beyond the date of the last scheduled class period of the semester, unless an extension is granted in writing by both the instructor and the Class Dean.

A student who is prevented by illness from attending a semester examination may be granted the privilege of a special examination by the instructor and the Class Dean, who will arrange the date of the examination with the instructor. There are no second or make-up semester examinations, unless a student is prevented by illness from taking such an examination at the scheduled time.

A semester examination may be postponed only by approval of the instructor and the Class Dean.

Only for medical reasons or those of grave personal emergency will extensions be granted beyond the second day after the examination period.

### VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWALS AND EDUCATIONAL LEAVES

The College has traditionally recognized the educational and personal rewards that many students receive from a semester or two away from the campus. Some departments, especially language departments, strongly encourage or require that students majoring in their department study in a foreign country. Occasionally, faculty members, advisors, or deans may suggest that students withdraw from formal studies to gain fresh perspectives on their intellectual commitments, career plans, or educational priorities. Family circumstances, medical problems, declining motivation, and other factors commonly encountered by students may require that they remain away from the College for more than the usual College vacation periods. The College, therefore, encourages students to consider carefully their situations, to clarify their objectives, and to decide for themselves whether they should temporarily interrupt their study at the College and take voluntary withdrawals or go on educational leaves.

Students who wish to explore the advantages and disadvantages of voluntary withdrawals and educational leaves should confer with their class deans, College and departmental advisors, resident counselors and parents. Some students will also find it beneficial to discuss their situations and tentative plans with the Registrar, the Study Abroad Advisor, the foreign language departments, the Career Center and the Dean of Financial Aid.

Students who go on educational leave from the College usually do so during the junior year, although sophomore year educational leaves are permitted. It is expected that students will spend their senior year at Amherst. To receive academic credit for study elsewhere, students must perform satisfactorily in a full schedule of courses approved in advance by the Dean of Students Office, the Registrar, and the students' advisors. Students on educational leave from Amherst must enroll at other institutions as visiting non-degree students. (See Transfer Policy statement.)

To ensure that students have ample time for changing their status with the College and to allow the College to maintain full use of its educational facilities, some minimum procedures and deadlines have been instituted. All students considering voluntary withdrawals or educational leaves for the fall semester must notify their class deans and advisors before March 15. Students who may be away from campus for the spring term should notify their dean and advisor before April 15 of the previous year. Students who fail to notify the dean of their plans prior to these deadlines will not be guaranteed housing for the semester in which they prefer to return. Educational leaves usually require a considerable amount of correspondence with other colleges and universities, especially in the case of foreign study. Therefore, students who may wish to go on educational leaves should begin discussing their plans at least a full semester before they expect to be enrolled in another institution.

Students considering educational leaves and withdrawals should also read the next section on Readmission.

Prior to the seventh week of any semester, students may choose to withdraw voluntarily without their final grades being recorded. However, unless granted exemptions for disabling medical reasons or grave personal emergencies by the Committee on Academic Standing or the class deans, students who withdraw after the seventh week of a semester will withdraw with penalty and have final grades for that semester recorded on their permanent academic records. Refunds of tuition, deposits and fees are treated according to the College policy stated on page 53 of this Catalog. When withdrawals have been approved by the class deans and faculty advisors, the deans will specify any readmission requirements in writing and will indicate what academic work, if any, must be completed prior to readmission.

## READMISSION

All students requesting readmission after voluntary withdrawals and academic dismissals and all students on educational leaves who wish to return for the fall semester should write to their class deans as early as possible, but before March 15. For students planning to return for the spring semester, the letters should be received by the College before November 1. In most instances, the deans will approve the readmission requests immediately. In some cases, additional information, such as an interview on-campus with a class dean, may be requested. Readmission requests from students seeking to return from academic dismissals and, in some cases, from voluntary withdrawals will be referred to the Committee on Academic Standing. In these cases, detailed letters requesting readmission, accompanied by grade reports of courses taken at an approved college or university, letters from employers, and other documents supporting the readmission requests should be sent to the class deans. Students on educational leaves should simply confirm their intention of returning to the campus before the above stated dates. Failure to meet these deadlines will jeopardize students' opportunities to participate in the student residence room-selection.

## TRANSFER POLICY

Amherst College students who are considering transferring to other institutions should understand that the College will not readmit those who choose to become degree candidates at other colleges and universities. All Amherst College students who transfer to and enroll as degree candidates at other institutions will forfeit their opportunity to re-enroll in the College. Before arranging to transfer, students should discuss their plans and options with their class dean.

Students who plan to attend other colleges and universities while on educational leave or as participants in exchange programs must have explicit written understanding with Amherst College as well as confirmation from host schools that they will be enrolled as visitors, rather than as degree candidates. (See page 75 regarding academic credit from other institutions.)

## DELINQUENCIES

At the midpoint and end of each semester, the academic records of all students are reviewed by the class deans and the Committee on Academic Standing. Those students who have clearly shown their unfitness for academic work are dismissed from the College. The academic records of others about whom the Committee has some concern are also carefully examined. Depending on the degree of difficulty a student has experienced, he/she may be regularly reviewed, issued an academic warning or placed on probation. Students who, by failing a course, incur a deficiency in the number of courses required for normal progress toward graduation are expected to make up that course deficiency before being permitted to register for the next academic year. (See Course Requirements, page 70.)

Students belonging to one or more of the following groups may not expect to continue at Amherst College:

- a. Those who in any semester fail in two or more courses. Withdrawal from a course while failing it shall count as a failure.\*
- b. Those who in any semester fail a course and receive an average of less than 7 in courses passed.\*
- c. Those who in any semester pass all courses but receive an average of less than 6.
- d. Those who have accumulated delinquencies in three or more courses during their college careers.
- e. Those who have been on probation and have failed to meet the conditions of their probation.

Normally, a student dismissed from the College for reasons of unsatisfactory academic performance will not be eligible for readmission until he or she has been away from the College for two semesters. During this time he or she is usually expected to demonstrate readiness for return by completing a semester of approved academic work at another accredited college or university. Conditions for readmission shall be set forth clearly in writing and must be met by the student before he or she can be considered for readmission to the College.

Students taking courses in a summer school to make up a delinquency incurred at Amherst College must have their summer school courses approved in advance by the Registrar. The College does not grant transfer credit for courses completed with a grade below C.

\*See Degree Requirements.

## ROOMS AND BOARD

Dormitory and house rooms are equipped with bed, mattress, bureau, desk, chairs, and bookcase or shelves. Occupants furnish their own blankets, linen, pillows, and towels, and may provide extra furnishings if they wish, such as rugs, curtains, lamps, etc.; they may not add beds, sofas, lounges, or other furniture of such nature except under certain circumstances. More complete regulations for occupancy are contained in the *Student Handbook*.

All students living in dormitories and houses, except for those students living in the Humphries House cooperative, are required to subscribe to the 21 meals per week plan of Valentine Hall. Valentine Hall is able and willing to accommodate students with special dietary needs. There are no rebates for absence from meals.

Students with unique circumstances who want to live off campus should speak with the dean in charge of housing or their class dean. First-year students, unless specifically excused by the Dean of Students, are required to live in College-owned houses or with relatives.

# Degree Requirements

## BACHELOR OF ARTS

**T**HE DEGREE Bachelor of Arts is conferred upon students who have satisfactorily met the requirements described below. The plan of studies leading to this degree is arranged on the basis of the equivalent of an eight-semester course of study to be pursued by students in residence at Amherst College.

The degree Bachelor of Arts *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, or *summa cum laude* (Degree with Honors) is awarded to students who have successfully completed an approved program of Honors work with a department or program.

Other students who satisfactorily meet requirements as indicated below receive the degree, Bachelor of Arts, *rite*.

### REQUIREMENTS

Each student is responsible for meeting all degree requirements and for ensuring that the Registrar's Office has received all credentials.

The Bachelor of Arts degree is awarded to students who:

1. Complete 32 full semester courses *and* four years (eight semesters) of residence,\* except that a student who has dropped a course without penalty during the first year, or who has failed a course during the first or second year, shall be allowed to graduate, provided he or she has been four years in residence at the College and has satisfactorily completed 31 full courses.

\*In exceptional cases, a student with at least six semesters of residence at Amherst and at least 24 courses, excluding summer school courses not taken as make-up work or recognized as part of a transfer record, may apply for early graduation. Students seeking to graduate before they have satisfied the normal 32-course requirement will have the quality of their achievement thoroughly evaluated. The approval of the student's advisor, department, the Dean of Faculty, the Committee of Six, and finally the Faculty must be received to be granted the status of candidate for the degree.

Transfer students must complete 32 full semester courses or their equivalent, at least 16 of them at Amherst, and at least two years of residence at Amherst, except that a transfer student who has dropped a course without penalty during his or her first semester at Amherst shall be allowed to graduate with one less full course.

2. Complete the requirements for a major in a department or a group of departments including a satisfactory performance in the comprehensive evaluation.

3. Attain a general average of 6 in the courses completed at Amherst and a grade of at least C in every course completed at another institution for transfer credit to Amherst.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

All students except Independent Scholars are required to elect four full courses each semester and may elect an additional half course. The election of a half course in addition to the normal program is at the discretion of the student and without special permission. A student may not elect more than one half course in any semester except by consent of his or her class dean and the departments concerned. In such cases the student's program will be three full courses and two half courses. Half courses are not normally included in the 32-course requirement for graduation.

In exceptional cases a student may, with the permission of both his or her academic advisor and class dean, take five full courses for credit during a given semester. Such permission is normally granted only to students of demonstrated superior academic ability, responsibility, and will. Fifth courses cannot be used to accelerate graduation. On occasion, a student who has failed a course may be permitted to take a fifth course in a given semester if, in the judgment of the Committee on Academic Standing, this additional work can be undertaken without prejudice to the student's regular program.

Also in exceptional cases a student may petition the Dean of Students at the time of admission or prior to the beginning of any semester for permission to enroll in a program of three courses per semester for any number of semesters of his or her enrollment at Amherst. Such permission may be granted only for reasons of physical disability (e.g., for students who have serious visual or hearing impairments) or compelling family responsibility (e.g., for students who are parents and have custodial responsibility for their children). In such cases, the student may be granted permission to spend as many as two additional semesters at Amherst College and to graduate with no fewer than 31 courses.

A student who by failing a course incurs a deficiency in the number of courses required for normal progress toward graduation is usually expected to make up that course deficiency by taking a three- or four-semester hour course at another approved institution during the summer prior to the first semester of the next academic year. (See additional information under Delinquencies, page 68.)

A student may not add a course to his/her program after the fourteenth calendar day of the semester, or drop a course after this date except as follows.

First-year students who experience severe academic difficulty may petition the Dean of New Students for permission to drop one course without penalty during their first year. The Dean of New Students, in consultation with the instructor and advisor, will decide on the basis of the student's educational needs whether or not to grant the petition. Petitions to withdraw from a course will normally be accepted only during the sixth, seventh, and eighth weeks of either the first or the second semester. Exceptions to this rule shall be made only

for disabling medical reasons or reasons of grave personal emergency, and shall be made only by the Dean of New Students.

Transfer students may petition their Class Dean to drop one course without penalty during the sixth, seventh, and eighth weeks of their first semester at Amherst. They must follow the petition procedure described above. The Class Dean, in consultation with the student's instructor and advisor, will decide whether or not to grant this petition.

For sophomores, juniors, and seniors, exceptions to the rule prohibiting the dropping of a course after the fourteenth calendar day of the semester shall be made only for disabling medical reasons or reasons of grave personal emergency, and shall be made only by the Dean of Students in consultation with the student's class dean.

Courses taken by a student after withdrawing from Amherst College, as part of a graduate or professional program in which that student is enrolled, are not applicable toward an Amherst College undergraduate degree.

### THE LIBERAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

Under a curriculum adopted in 1996, the first-year students are required to take a First-Year Seminar. These courses are planned and taught by one or more members of the Faculty as a way to introduce students to liberal studies through a range of innovative and often interdisciplinary approaches. The subject matter of the courses varies, as do the capabilities they seek to encourage. These range from writing, quantitative skills, scientific reasoning, oral presentation, and argumentation, to performing, creating and contemplative learning. All seminar instructors share the goal of helping students develop an analytic approach to the course material.

Through these classes, first-year students are exposed to the diversity of learning that takes place at the College. Small groups of students work closely with professors in a collaborative atmosphere and immerse themselves deeply in the course's particular subject matter. Typically, informed discussion is a major component of a first-year seminar. The courses offered for 2008-09 are described on pages 79-86.

Amherst's liberal studies curriculum is based on a concept of education as a process or activity rather than a form of production. The curriculum provides a structure within which each student may confront the meaning of his or her education, and does it without imposing a particular course or subject on all students. Students are encouraged to continue to seek diversity and attempt integration through their course selection and to discuss this with their advisors.

Under the curriculum, most members of the Faculty serve as academic advisors to students. Every student has a College Advisor until he or she declares a major, no later than the end of the sophomore year; thereafter each student will have a Major Advisor from the student's field of concentration. As student and advisor together plan a student's program, they should discuss whether the student has selected courses that:

- provide knowledge of culture and a language other than one's own and of human experience in a period before one's lifetime;
- analyze one's own polity, economic order, and culture;
- employ abstract reasoning;
- work within the scientific method;
- engage in creative action—doing, making and performing;
- interpret, evaluate, and explore the life of the imagination.

## THE MAJOR REQUIREMENT

Liberal education seeks to develop the student's awareness and understanding of the individual and of the world's physical and social environments. If one essential object in the design of education at Amherst is breadth of understanding, another purpose, equally important, is mastery of one or more areas of knowledge in depth. Upperclassmen are required to concentrate their studies—to select and pursue a major—in order to deepen their understanding; to gain specific knowledge of a field and its special concerns, and to master and appreciate the skills needed in that disciplined effort.

A major normally consists of at least eight courses pursued under the direction of a department or special group. A major may begin in either the first or second year and must be declared by the end of the second year. Students may change their majors at any time, provided that they will be able to complete the new program before graduation.

The major program can be devised in accordance with either of two plans:

### DEPARTMENTAL MAJORS

Students may complete the requirement of at least eight courses within one department. They must complete at least six courses within one department and the remaining two courses in related fields approved by the department.

Some Amherst students may wish to declare a major in more than one department or program. This curricular option is available, although it entails special responsibilities. At Amherst, departments are solely responsible for defining the content and structure of an acceptable program of study for majors. Students who elect a double major must present the signatures of both academic advisors when registering for each semester's courses and they must, of course, fulfill the graduation requirements and comprehensive examinations established by two academic programs. In addition, double majors may not credit courses approved for either major toward the other without the explicit consent of an announced departmental policy or the signature of a departmental chairperson. In their senior year, students with a double major must verify their approved courses with both academic advisors *before* registering for their last semester at the College.

### INTERDISCIPLINARY MAJORS

Students with special needs who desire to construct an interdisciplinary major will submit a proposed program, endorsed by one or more professors from each of the departments concerned, to the Committee on Academic Standing and Special Majors. Under ordinary circumstances, the proposal will be submitted during the first semester of the junior year and not under any circumstances later than the eighth week of the second junior semester. The program will include a minimum of six upper-level courses and a thesis plan. Upon approval of the program by the Committee on Academic Standing and Special Majors, an ad hoc advisory committee of three professors appointed by the Committee will have all further responsibility for approving any possible modifications in the program, administering an appropriate comprehensive examination, reviewing the thesis and making recommendations for the degree with or without Honors. Information on preparation, form, and submission of proposed interdisciplinary programs is available in the Office of the Dean of Students.

A part of the major requirement in every department is an evaluation of the student's comprehension in his or her major field of study. This evaluation may

be based on a special written examination or upon any other performance deemed appropriate by each department. The mode of the evaluation need not be the same for all the majors within a department, and, indeed, may be designed individually to test the skills each student has developed.

The evaluation should be completed by the seventh week of the second semester of the senior year. Any student whose comprehension is judged to be inadequate will have two opportunities for reevaluation: one not later than the last day of classes of the second semester of the senior year, and the other during the next college year.

### DEGREE WITH HONORS

The requirements for graduation with a degree with honors are as follows:

The degree Bachelor of Arts with Honors is awarded at graduation to students whose academic records give evidence of particular merit. Latin Honors are awarded to students completing a thesis within their major department or program. English honors are awarded to students solely on the basis of performance in course work. The awarding of both Latin and English honors will be made by the Faculty of the College, and will appear on the diploma. In making such awards, the Faculty will observe the following guidelines:

#### *Latin Honors*

1. Candidates eligible for the degree *summa cum laude* must have a minimum overall grade point average in the top 25% of their class and have received a recommendation of *summa* based on a thesis or comparable work from a department or program in which they have majored. In addition, the theses of candidates for the degree *summa cum laude* will be reviewed by the Committee of Six, who will transmit its recommendation to the Faculty. Candidates will also have their entire records reviewed by the Dean of the Faculty and the Committee of Six, who will transmit their recommendations to the Faculty.

2. Candidates eligible for the degree *magna cum laude* must have a minimum overall grade point average in the top 25% of their class and have received a recommendation of *magna* based on a thesis or comparable work from a department or program in which they have majored. Although each department or program may define additional criteria upon which it will base its recommendation, the candidate must submit a thesis or comparable work that is judged by the department or program to be of *magna* quality.

3. Candidates eligible for the degree *cum laude* must have received a recommendation of *cum* based on a thesis or comparable work from a department or program in which they have majored. Although each department or program may define additional criteria upon which it will base its recommendation, the candidate must submit a thesis or comparable work that is judged by the department or program to be of *cum* quality.

#### *Distinction*

Candidates eligible for a degree with Distinction must have an overall grade point average in the top 25% of their class.

### INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR PROGRAM

A limited number of students who elect to do so may participate in an Independent Scholar Program, usually in the junior or senior years in lieu of a traditional major program. Participants are chosen by the four-member Faculty Committee on Academic Standing and Special Majors, which includes the

Dean of Students, after nomination for the program by a member of the Faculty. Independent Scholars are free to plan a personal program of study under the direction of a tutor, chosen by the student with the advice and consent of the Committee. The tutor provides the guidance and counsel necessary to help the student attain the educational objectives he or she has set. The tutor and one or more other members of the Faculty familiar with the student's work will ultimately assign a comprehensive grade and provide a detailed, written evaluation of the student's performance which will become part of the individual's formal record at Amherst College. Grades in such regular courses as the student may elect will be taken into account in assigning the comprehensive grade, and the student is eligible for a degree with Honors, as well as all other awards and distinctions.

### FIELD STUDY

The Faculty has instituted a program of Field Study under which students may pursue a course of study away from Amherst for either one or two semesters. Students are admitted to the program by the Committee on Academic Standing and Special Majors after approval of their written proposal and are assigned a Field Study Advisor chosen from the Faculty.

Upon being admitted to Field Study, students become candidates for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Field Study, which is normally attained in four-and-one-half or five years. During the first semester in residence at Amherst after the period of Field Study, students must take a Special Topics course, normally with their Field Study Advisor, in which they draw on both their experience of Field Study and further investigation relating to it. Students may also pursue a related Special Topics course in the semester before they enter their program of Field Study.

Students pursuing a two-semester plan of Field Study will be allowed to continue after the first semester only upon providing evidence to the Committee that they are satisfactorily carrying out their program. No student shall begin study in the field later than the first semester of the senior year.

Students pursuing Field Study shall maintain themselves financially in the field, and during the period shall pay a Field Study fee of \$50 to the College in lieu of tuition.

The transcript of a student who has undertaken Field Study shall include a short description and appraisal by the Field Advisor of the student's project and of the related Special Topics course.

### FIVE COLLEGE COURSES

Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke and Smith Colleges and the University of Massachusetts have for some time combined their academic activities in selected areas for the purpose of extending and enriching their collective educational resources. Certain specialized courses not ordinarily available at the undergraduate level are operated jointly and open to all. In addition, students in good standing at any of the five institutions may take a course, without cost, at any of the other four if the course is significantly different from any offered on their own campus and they have the necessary qualifications.

The course must have a bearing on the educational plan arranged by the student and his or her advisor. Professional, technical and vocational courses are not generally open for Five College interchange credit. Those courses accrue credit toward degrees other than the Bachelor of Arts degree which is offered at Amherst College. Individual exceptions must be approved by both advisor

and Dean of the Faculty on the basis of the student's complete academic program at the College.

The Premedical Committee reminds health preprofessional students that required courses (biology, chemistry, mathematics, physics) should normally be taken at Amherst College and not at other Five College institutions.

To enroll in a Five College course, an Amherst student must have the approval of his or her advisor and the Dean of the Faculty. Only under special circumstances will permission be granted by the advisor and the Dean of the Faculty for an Amherst student to enroll in more than two Five College courses per semester. If permission to enroll in a course is required for students of the institution at which the course is offered, students from the other Five Colleges must also obtain the instructor's permission to enroll.

Free bus transportation among the five institutions is available for interchange students.

Students interested in such courses will find current catalogs of the other institutions at the Loan Desk of the Library and at the Registrar's Office. Application blanks may be obtained from the Registrar's Office.

Other aspects of Five College cooperation are described in the *Student Handbook*.

#### ACADEMIC CREDIT FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Amherst College does not grant academic credit for work completed at other institutions of higher education unless it meets one of the following criteria: (1) each course offered as part of a transfer record has been completed and accepted by the College prior to matriculation at Amherst; (2) the work is part of an exchange program of study in the United States or abroad approved in advance by a Dean of Students and the Registrar; or (3) the work has been approved by the Registrar as appropriate to make up a deficiency deriving from work not completed or failed at Amherst College (see Delinquencies).

#### COOPERATIVE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

A cooperative Doctor of Philosophy program has been established by Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, and Smith Colleges, and the University of Massachusetts. The degree is awarded by the University of Massachusetts, but some, perhaps much—and in a few exceptional cases even all—of the work leading to the degree might be done in one or more of the other institutions.

When a student has been awarded a degree under this program, the fact that it is a cooperative doctoral degree involving Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, and Smith Colleges and the University of Massachusetts will be indicated on the diploma, the permanent record, and all transcripts, as well as on the commencement program.

The requirements for the degree are identical to those for the Ph.D. degree at the University of Massachusetts except for the statement relating to "residence." For the cooperative Ph.D. degree "residence" is defined as the institution where the dissertation is being done.

Students interested in this program should write to the Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Massachusetts. However, a student who wishes to work under the direction of a member of the Amherst Faculty must have the proposal approved by the Dean of the Faculty of Amherst College and by the Amherst Faculty Committee of Six.