

Great Books

The Great Books Program is an interdisciplinary liberal arts program. It is designed to provide students with the opportunity to explore some of the perennial questions of human existence through the reading and discussion of original works by men and women from across the ages. All courses are team-taught by a minimum of two instructors to ensure an interdisciplinary perspective. All students planning on completing the Major or Honours program in Great Books are required to complete a second Major.

Honours

An Honours Bachelor of Arts in Great Books requires 54 credit hours, including GRBK 2006, one of 2106 or 2206, four of 3106, 3206, 3306, 3406, 3506 or 3606, 3706, 3706, 3903, 4903, 4906, 4913; and an approved 3 credit-hour course at the 3000/4000 level in another discipline. Students interested in an Honours degree in Great Books should apply to the Great Books Steering Committee by the beginning of their third year. Students should indicate when applying for the Honours BA in Great Books which courses they propose to count for these credits. Students are also strongly encouraged to take 6 credit hours of a language, particularly one that will be connected to their thesis. Students must take GRBK 3903 in their third year. Application forms are available from the Director of Great Books. Entrance to the Great Books Honours Program requires a 3.7 GPA in Great Books courses and a 3.3 GPA in all other courses.

Major

To complete the Great Books Major, students are required to complete the following thematic courses:

- Second year: 12 credit hours (GRBK 2006 and one other 2000 level course)
- Third year: 12 credit hours in upper-level Great Books courses
(GRBK 3106, 3206, 3306, 3406, 3506, 3606, 3706)
- Fourth year: 12 credit hours in upper-level Great Books courses
(GRBK 3106, 3206, 3306, 3406, 3506, 3606, 3706)

Great Books Courses Cross-listed in Other Departments

- GRBK 2006 Quest for the Good Life is cross-listed with Political Science (3 credits only)
- GRBK 3106 Love and Friendship is cross-listed with both English and Philosophy
- GRBK 3306 Justice is cross-listed with Political Science (3 credits only)
- GRBK 3506 Freedom is cross-listed with Political Science (3 credits only) and with ENGL 3903

Note:

- GRBK 2206 Human Nature and Technology counts towards the Group C requirement|
- GRBK 3406 Philosophy and Art counts towards the Group D requirement

GRBK-1006. Great Thinkers and Writers

This course explores how great books address perennial human questions about knowledge, nature, love, justice, and freedom. The course is team-taught by two faculty members and prioritizes conversation over lecture. Together we read a range of great books from the ancient world up to the present day, such as novels by writers like Jane Austen and Toni Morrison, classical works by Homer, Plato and Augustine, and influential works of political thought by Aristotle, Nietzsche and Hannah Arendt.

GRBK-2006. The Quest for the Good Life (HMRT 2206)

This course is designed to approach the perennial issue of The Quest for the Good Life through the thoughtful reading of some of the greatest works in a variety of disciplines. The texts may include ancient and modern, all selected because they speak to and illuminate this theme. Texts will vary from year to year but will include works such as Aristotle's *Ethics*, the *Bible*, Machiavelli's *Prince*, and Camus' *The Plague*.

GRBK-2103. Eros and Empire

Many works of Ancient Greek literature and philosophy can be understood as responses to The Peloponnesian War (431-405 BCE). The conflict between Athens and Sparta seemed to reveal important truths about the dangers of imperialism, the limits of human power, and the role of eros (desire) in politics. In this study abroad course, students will travel to Athens, and read Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, alongside works by Plato and Aristophanes.

GRBK-2106. The Quest for the Good Life II

Building on the themes developed in GRBK 2006, this course is designed to approach the perennial issue of The Quest for the Good Life through the thoughtful reading of some of the greatest works in a variety of disciplines. The texts will include ancient and modern, all selected because they speak to and illuminate this theme. Texts will vary from year to year but will include works such as Homer's *Odyssey*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Prerequisite: GRBK 2006, or permission of the instructors.

GRBK-2206. Human Nature and Technology (HMRT 2216)

This course will study the way in which diverse thinkers have considered the question of human nature. This question will be sharpened with a consideration of the way in which human beings considered as natural beings use and are affected by technology. Texts will vary from year to year, but may include works such as: Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Grant's *Technology and Empire*, Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology*, Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Gaskell's *North and South*, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, and Sterling's *Holy Fire*.

GRBK-2306. War and Peace

This course will investigate the causes and consequences of conflict through a close study of literature, philosophy, history, and political theory. The course will examine the political failures that lead to wars, the ways that human drives and interests manifest themselves within war, as well as the material, psychological, and spiritual costs of war. Texts may include Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Shakespeare's *Henry V*, Arendt's *On Violence*, and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*.

GRBK-3106. Love and Friendship

This course will explore the interrelated themes of friendship, love, and beauty. Each theme will be examined separately and as connected to the others. Ancient and modern texts will be used to examine the ways that different ages have addressed these fundamentally personal and yet common human experiences. Texts will vary from year to year, but may include works such as Plato's *Symposium*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Rousseau's *Confessions*, Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, LeGuin's *Left Hand of Darkness*, Woolf's *Orlando*, and Bellow's *Ravelstein*. Prerequisites: GRBK 2006, or permission of the instructors.

GRBK-3206. Nations and Borders

This course will explore how humans use geographic, racial, and cultural categories to understand themselves and others. It is particularly concerned with how individuals define themselves as belonging to, distinct from, or in conflict with particular nations, cultures, or peoples. Students will explore themes such as nationalism, colonialism, exile, racism, slavery, and globalization. Texts may include *Exodus*, Shakespeare's *Othello*, Behn's *Oroonoko*, Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, Sears' *Harlem Duet*, and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.

GRBK-3306. Justice (HMRT 3206) (POLS)

This course will explore the nature of human community and the question of justice. Themes to be addressed will include an individual's responsibility to others, the role of community in promoting human happiness, the manner in which we are both limited and fulfilled by justice, and the relationship of justice and law. Texts will vary from year to year, but may include works such as: Plato's *Republic*, Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, Sayers' *Gaudy Night*, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*, Marx's *The German Ideology*, and King's *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. Prerequisites: GRBK 2006, or permission of the instructors.

GRBK-3406. Philosophy and Art

This course will explore the relationship between philosophy, or the search for wisdom, and art. In particular, it will examine the relationship of human reason and imagination and the degree to which art can serve as a vehicle for truth. Texts may include Euripides' *Bacchant*, Plato's *Protagoras*, Aristotle's *Poetics*, Book of Revelation, Sidney's *Defence of Poetry*, and Hegel's *Aesthetics*. Prerequisites: GRBK 2006 and GRBK 2106.

GRBK-3506. Freedom (HMRT 3216)

This course will examine the nature of freedom in the context of human life and community. Questions to be addressed will include: To what extent are human beings free by nature? Should political communities promote freedom? What might be appropriate limitations on our freedom? Texts may include Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Plato's *Crito*, Aquinas' *On Free Will*, Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and Hegel's *The Philosophy of Right*. Prerequisite: GRBK 2006.

GRBK-3606. Faith and Reason

This course will explore faith and reason as two ways by which human beings apprehend the truth, the fundamental object of our understanding. The nature and capacity of faith and reason as well as their relationship to one another will be explored through literary and philosophic texts that posit either one or both of these modes as the path to knowledge. Texts may vary from year to year, but normally the course will include works such as Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, *The Gospel of John*, Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, selections from Luther, and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Prerequisite: GRBK 2006.

GRBK-3706. Shakespeare and Politics (ENGL)

This course will explore the works of Shakespeare in the context of Renaissance political thought as reflected in his plays and in early modern political texts. We will focus on the plays, although Shakespeare's non-dramatic works may be included, as well as modern film adaptations. Prerequisite: ENGL 1006, or permission of instructor.

GRBK-3903. Honours Thesis Proposal

The purpose of this course is to afford students interested in writing an Honours thesis the opportunity to develop a thorough proposal, including a substantial annotated bibliography. Students will work closely with their thesis director in developing and writing the thesis proposal. Classes will meet throughout the term to assess progress. Students will be required to present and defend their proposal before their classmates and the faculty of the Great Books Program. Students must complete this course to be eligible for GRBK 4906.

GRBK-4003. Independent Study

Students undertake an independent study under the direction of a member of the Great Books faculty, with the permission of the Great Books Director. This course is limited to students of proven academic merit.

GRBK-4006. Independent Study

Students undertake an independent study under the direction of a member of the Great Books faculty, with the permission of the Great Books Director. This course is limited to students of proven academic merit.

GRBK-4806. Special Topics Course

This course involves the in-depth study of a particular text or set of texts related thematically. The course will be organized around the particular interests and expertise of the available faculty member teaching it, so as to capitalize on the research and theoretical interests of faculty participants in Great Books. Its content will also take into account the particular needs of students in any given academic year.

GRBK-4903. Honours Seminar

This seminar will be centred on the intensive study of the text(s) of a thinker who has greatly influenced the shape of the western world. The texts may be ancient or modern, and may be literary, historical, philosophic, and/or political in nature.

GRBK-4906. Honours Thesis

The Honours thesis is an extended scholarly paper on a topic written under the supervision of a faculty member who agrees to serve as thesis director. When completed, the students will be required to present and defend the thesis before their classmates and the faculty of the Great Books Program. Students must complete GRBK 3903 to be eligible for GRBK 4906.

GRBK-4913. Capstone Seminar

The capstone seminar in Great Books will be an author/work specific course in which students spend an extensive period of time studying the text(s) of a thinker who has greatly influenced the shape of the western world. The author or texts may be ancient or modern, and may be literary, historical, philosophic and/or political in nature.

NOTE: Not all courses listed are offered each year. Please consult with the Program Director for more information about current and planned course offerings.