

The Plan II Honors Program

Established in 1935, Plan II is a challenging interdisciplinary curriculum leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree. Plan II differs from most honors programs in that its core curriculum is itself a major. Over a third of the courses required for a Plan II degree are limited to Plan II students. The remaining classes are chosen from the extensive list of the University's departmental offerings. Many of these classes will be as challenging as honors courses.

Plan II is a four-year interdisciplinary major with a core curriculum in modern arts and sciences. Plan II's original aim comes close to what the ancient Greeks meant by *paideia* — education for active citizenship as opposed to vocational training. The core curriculum creates a common experience that allows for a high level of conversation among Plan II students, thus creating a broad-based interdisciplinary community with a shared vocabulary and range of concerns.

A distinctive feature of Plan II is its interdisciplinary character. Plan II students take pride in being part of an arts and sciences program, and along with their Plan II degree, they major in virtually every area of the university. Although the Plan II program is interdisciplinary, students concentrate in the areas of their theses and are well prepared for graduate schools in their chosen subjects.

Our majors are rarely planning to major in the areas that Plan II requires them to study, their career interests cover the range from architecture to zoology, and they have the power to bring their interests to bear on any class they take. Plan II classes typically create dialogue among science, business, engineering, and liberal arts students.

Plan II seminars are designed to be interdisciplinary. But even in discipline-specific courses our students inject an interdisciplinary element. As a result, many professors report that they cannot teach the same courses in the same way for Plan II and for their home departments.

The following courses comprise the Plan II core requirements:

- A year-long freshman course in world literature from the ancients to the present. The World Lit course begins with classical literature, including epic, and moves in the second semester to modern literature and usually includes contemporary works.
- The First Year Plan II Signature course, which has two aims: to teach its own peculiar content (and sometimes this is very peculiar) and to teach first year students how to be ideal college students. These seminars allow students to acquire and improve skills in responding thoughtfully to texts and other material, and in exchanging ideas with their colleagues. The course should instill respect for the importance of ideas and give students the opportunity to develop skills in refining their insights and beliefs into coherent arguments, both in writing and in speaking.

- A year long philosophy course for sophomores with the aim of encouraging students to think for themselves, both about ethical matters and about more abstract issues. Students should also achieve the capacity to approach any material in a critical and analytic spirit, with a readiness to appreciate the strength of opposing views, and an appreciation of the force of the arguments that can be mustered for and against their own positions.

- Two junior-level interdisciplinary seminars develop and refine students' analytic and synthesizing capacities. The seminars aim to impart an understanding of the peculiar subject matter of each seminar. The unique goal, however, is to cultivate advanced research and writing skills that can be transferred over a range of subjects, and that are suitable for use in a senior thesis. Graded oral presentations are usually required along with substantial term papers; students who have taken a junior seminar should be ready to present research in oral or written format, as for the senior thesis or the Plan II Senior Thesis Symposium.

- A requirement of one semester of honors social science. Recent Plan II honors social science courses have been taught recently in economics, anthropology, psychology, sociology, political theory and linguistics. The aim is to introduce students to theories of social science while building their knowledge of the contemporary issues involved in that science. Courses are more interdisciplinary than comparable courses in the discipline and typically introduce the investigatory tools of social science to strengthen critical thinking skills and their application to contemporary social issues.

- Two semesters of non-US history covering one geographical area (broadly defined by continent). The aim is historical depth in one area, as well as the breadth that comes from being a counterweight to the twelve-hour legislative requirement (of six hours of US history and six hours of US government including Texas government).

- A four-semester honors sequence in modes of reasoning, theoretical math or calculus, life sciences, and physical sciences. Our demanding science courses are a point of pride in Plan II. Plan II is committed to requiring science courses that offer some part of the experience of thinking the way scientists think, rather than courses that merely describe science or teach about science from liberal arts points of view such as those of history or philosophy or social science.

- A senior thesis, a major independent research and writing project, which is the culmination of a student's academic program in Plan II

In addition, students must satisfy University and College requirements with courses in both US government and history, a fine arts/humanities sequence, foreign language proficiency, and additional math or science.

The elective hours incorporated into the Plan II curriculum provide flexibility if Plan II students choose to complete the equivalent of a second major in a particular subject area. Someone wanting a career in banking might concentrate elective hours in economics, or even the Business Foundations certificate program. Many students complete the premed curriculum or a pre-law concentration in conjunction with their Plan II major and go on to medical school or law school.