Liberal Studies

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Program Description

The Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (M.A.L.S.) is an interdisciplinary degree that provides the opportunity for graduate students to undertake studies in the liberal arts within a structured program but without an exclusive concentration in one discipline. Studies in this program generally focus on issues in the liberal arts disciplines of fine arts, social sciences, or humanities.

Students in the M.A.L.S. Program create their own unique interdisciplinary plans of study that combine fields such as English, foreign languages, history, philosophy, religious studies, or women's studies. Specific topics of study may include area studies, e.g., American studies, Appalachian studies, or French culture; or they may include other special interests, e.g., religion, media studies, or gender studies. Such topics cross disciplinary lines and require courses in several academic units.

The multidisciplinary M.A.L.S. Committee is appointed by the program director and approved by the Dean of the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences to administer this program. This committee serves as the program’s admissions committee and plays a role that is similar to that of an academic department in a more traditional degree program. WVU faculty members from a wide range of disciplines, both within and outside of the Eberly College, serve on the M.A.L.S. Committee and are also eligible to serve as members of a M.A.L.S. student’s master’s committee.

Admission and Application Materials

• Bachelor's degree transcript from an accredited institution with a minimum undergraduate grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale (Probationary status may be granted to students who do not meet this minimum standard.)
• GRE General Test scores that demonstrate the ability to do graduate work
• Plan of study which has been approved by the M.A.L.S. Committee (see below for details)
• Confidential letters of recommendation from at least two individuals who are able to assess the applicant’s ability to undertake the plan of study that he or she has proposed
• Written agreement from a member of the regular graduate faculty at West Virginia University to serve as chair of the applicant’s master’s committee
• An essay that describes the applicant’s central focus or theme to be followed in the program
• Submit an Application for Graduate Admission, along with undergraduate transcripts, transcripts from any prior graduate work, and GRE scores to the Office of Admissions

Financial Aid is Available

The M.A.L.S. program has a small number of meritorious student tuition waiver hours available each semester. Check with the WVU Financial Aid Office for more information on grants, loans, and other scholarships: http://financialaid.wvu.edu/.

Plan of Study

The plan of study is submitted as part of a M.A.L.S. application. This document must include the following materials:

• A schedule of proposed courses
• The graduate catalog description including title, course number, credit hours, and prerequisites for all proposed courses
• For any proposed independent study course, teaching practicum, field-experience course, or other course which is not a regularly scheduled classroom course: a precise description of the subject that will be studied and the faculty member who has agreed to supervise this course

NOTE: This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the information that needs to be included in a M.A.L.S. application essay. See the WVU Graduate Catalog or the M.A.L.S. Program brochure for additional guidelines: MALS_Program_Description_2012.doc (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/eberlycollegeofartsandsciences/liberalstudies/MALS_Program_Description_2012.doc).
Degree Requirements

There are several general requirements for all graduate programs at WVU in addition to requirements specific to the M.A.L.S. program.

University Requirements

- Graduate credit is awarded only for courses at the 400-level or above
- No more than forty percent of course credits counted toward a graduate degree may be at the 400-level
- A maximum of twelve hours of coursework taken before admission to a graduate program may be approved for credit toward that degree

MALS Requirements

At least thirty-six semester hours of approved course work must be completed subject to the following limitations:

- No more than eighteen hours from a single discipline
- No more than nine hours of independent study (This limit applies only to courses labeled either “independent study” or “directed study” in the graduate catalog.)
- At least six hours in different disciplines
- Three hours of coursework in research methodology
- A minimum 3.25 grade point average for all coursework in the degree program
- Fulfillment of all requirements of the study contract
- Successful completion of a final project, e.g., a master’s thesis, a comprehensive examination, a lecture, a recital, a portfolio of creative work, or the design of a website

Those interested in applying for the M.A.L.S. Program should choose a member of the regular graduate faculty at WVU to chair their committee. This person will include written agreement to serve as chair of the applicant’s master’s committee.

Once admitted to the M.A.L.S. Program, the student chooses the remaining members of the master’s committee and then draws up a final plan of study with the help of the master’s committee chair, who also serves as the student’s advisor. It is recommended that the full master’s committee be chosen by the time the student completes the first nine-twelve hours of courses within the program. The full committee, and any changes in the committee, must be approved by the M.A.L.S. Program Director.