

LIBERAL STUDIES (MLS)

Program Director: Richard J. White

Program Office: Humanities Center, Room 110

GRADUATE STUDY IN LIBERAL STUDIES

Creighton's Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) differs dramatically from other graduate programs. Its cross-disciplinary emphasis frees students from the requirements of a particular profession or discipline. The MALS Program at Creighton encourages an individual student to work with the faculty to plan and carry out a program of study based on the student's life goals, objectives, and interests. At the same time, the MALS Program is committed to building and supporting a community of learners. In addition to MALS courses, all other graduate courses at Creighton are open to MALS students.

The central theme of Creighton's MALS Program is "Understanding the World." This theme is an important point of orientation in every discussion of every MALS course.

Courses in the MALS Program are distinguished by an emphasis on intensive faculty-student and student-student work, practice in traditional and unconventional modes of scholarship, and direct experience with the elements of the course. The interdisciplinary approach, a fundamental principle of the MALS Program, affords students a rare opportunity to work with distinguished Creighton professors from various academic fields.

Program Goals

1. Students will have a good grounding in the Humanities broadly conceived. They will have an integrated knowledge and understanding of different Humanities perspectives and approaches.
2. Students will be capable of intelligent and well-argued analyses of specific themes and problems in the Humanities field. They will be able to formulate and investigate a particular issue of their own in some depth.
3. Students will experience the relationship of the humanities to broader questions of value (including morality and faith). They will reflectively integrate what they learn into the practice of their own lives. They will work with faculty and fellow students to create a community of learners.

Faculty

Professors: T. Burk (Biology), N. Chiwengo (English), R. Feezell (Philosophy), L. Greenspoon (Klutznick Chair), J. Mueller (Theology), J. Murray (Philosophy), R. Whipple (English), R. White (Philosophy).

Associate Professors: R. Bergman (Sociology), J. Carlson (Classics) F. Fajardo-Acosta (English), H. Grandbois (Social Work), J. Schuler (Philosophy), J. Welie (Center for Health Policy and Ethics);

Assistant Professors: M. Jiang, (Political Science), K. Rettig (English).

Admission Requirements

Three letters of recommendation, along with all undergraduate (and graduate, if applicable) transcripts are required. Non-degree-seeking students may enroll with "special student" status. The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is not required.

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This seminar explores some of the ways humans approach meaning for themselves and understand the world in which they live. Seminar participants explore meaning within intuitive, rational, and empirical perspectives.

A range of elective courses enables MALS students to achieve a rich interdisciplinary education. MALS students must complete nine elective graduate courses taken from a broad spectrum of disciplines, including art history, classics, history, world literature, natural sciences, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, religion and theology. Of the nine elective courses (27 credits), at least four must be MLS courses. The balance of this requirement may be fulfilled with courses selected in consultation with a MALS advisor from other graduate courses offered at Creighton University. Students may include up to 6 credits of work from a combination of approved graduate work at another university or 500-level course work at Creighton.

MALS students will demonstrate proficiency in a directed independent research project on a topic to be selected by the student in consultation with a faculty advisor. A student will register for and begin the directed independent research after the completion of 30 credit hours in the MALS program. The project will culminate in a written report and evaluation of the research. Following the completion of their research, students will either advance to the Final Project or take the final Capstone Course

Final Project - Following completion of all coursework, MALS students will undertake a final project. This project, which should build upon the Directed Independent Research, provides students with an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills gained through the Program to an independent activity of the student's design. The Final Project may take the form of academic research, applied research, or creative work. In all cases, a written analysis is necessary to fulfill the degree requirements. A final interview with a faculty committee, consisting of the Program Director and two faculty members, will conclude the project and the MALS Program.

Capstone Course - Instead of completing the Final Project students may elect to take the final capstone course in which they will be responsible for organizing sessions in conjunction with the faculty instructor and presenting the results of their research.

The following is a representative list of courses which have been taught in the MALS program over the past few years. New classes are frequently added.

This seminar will explore some of the many ways humans approach meaning for themselves and understand the world in which they live. Seminar participants will explore meaning within intuitive, rational and empirical perspectives.

This course will examine the historical, social and intellectual contexts of the many 20th century art movements including Modernism from abstraction to Pop Art, Post-Modernism, and recent trends. **P: Gr. stdg.**

From Gibbon through Nietzsche, an influential modern tradition of thought has interpreted Christian morality as an unfortunate devolution from the excellencies of the singular hero of antiquity to the mediocrity and complacency of the many faithful. The goal of this course is to understand the force of this criticism and to formulate a response by asking in what sense the Christian life might be heroic. Readings include exposure to accounts of heroic virtue in antiquity, articulations of Christian heroism in early Christianity, medieval and early modern literary attempts to Christian expression to classical themes of martial virtue, and modern treatments of the heroism of discipleship.

- MLS 615 Imagining the World: The Human Imagination in Theory and Practice (3)**
This course will explore the human imagination from both the theoretical and practical perspectives. On the one hand, it will consider theories of the imagination from a variety of disciplines (theology, philosophy, the arts, psychology). On the other hand, it will include the study and introductory practice of disciplines designed to hone imaginative capability (prayer, meditation, artistic disciplines, reading, physical disciplines). Students and instructor will reflect together upon questions that emerge from this study, e.g. the role of imagination in personal and public life, the honing of the imagination as an essential discipline of peacemaking, the imaginary life and pedagogical practice, learning to imagine “correctly” as a dimension of socialization.
- MLS 616 Evolution and Creation: Darwinism and its Opponents (3)**
An examination of the basic features of modern evolutionary biology, along with recent challenges to Darwinism from outside the mainstream community. Current understanding of the mechanisms and evidence for evolution is presented and the history of the anti-evolution social movement and the motivations underlying it are surveyed.
- MLS 618 Apocalypse and the End of the World (3)**
Apocalypses and visions of the end of the world arise from a clash between cultural values and social realities. They are an attempt to construct a meaningful world in the midst of chaos. This course will explore the social environment of apocalypses and apocalyptic movements, both ancient and modern; the cultural values embedded in these visions will be highlighted; and the value of apocalypses for world-construction will be examined.
- MLS 620 The West of the Imagination (3)**
A multi-disciplinary investigation of the American West and its impact on the American consciousness studied through geography, politics, history, art, architecture, music, film, literature and theater. The course will consider such topics as the idea of the frontier, Native Americans, economics and politics, and the persistence of the myth of the west in modern America.
- MLS 622 Issues in Public Policy (3)**
This course examines issues associated with the creation and implementation of public policy. Students will research a public policy in their own work area (e.g. environment, education, law, medicine, social welfare). They will examine assumptions of the knowledge base used in the creation of the policy and the justice concerns the policy attempts to resolve.
- MLS 624 Contemporary Ireland (3)**
Literary, historical and artistic perspectives on contemporary Ireland.
- MLS 625 The Changing American Family (3)**
Families and households are rapidly changing in America in relation to changes in other institutions (the economy, the state, educational systems). Evidence is accumulating that many changes are dysfunctional. This course will consider the question: Can families be adapted, reconsidered, or reconstituted to make them better structure for habitation, support, social accounting, and the positive socialization of children?
- MLS 627 Love and Sexuality (3)**
What is love? What is the relationship between love and beauty? Is love only the sublimation of sexuality? And how is romantic love related to friendship or the mystic’s love of God? This course will examine love and sex from a variety of different perspectives, using philosophy, literature, psychology and films to make sense of these basic human experiences.
- MLS 628 The Two Sexes (3)**
On gender construction in contemporary culture.
- MLS 630 The Moral Animal (3)**
Since Charles Darwin, evolutionary biologists have pondered the extent to which human behavior reflects our evolutionary ancestry. This topic has currently been actively revived under the titles of ‘human sociobiology’ and ‘evolutionary psychology.’ This course would examine the writings of the human sociobiologists, evolutionary psychologists, and their critics, to evaluate whether such a thing as an evolved ‘human nature’ exists, and if so whether it provides only a very general framework for understanding broad patterns in the behavior of modern people or whether it can go beyond that to provide a more detailed understanding of humans’ everyday actions.

- MLS 631 Rejected Communities: Writing Our Way Out (3)**
This class examines the situation of those who are excluded in various ways from the mainstream community -- in prisons and nursing homes and within public schools. Through literature, theatre and film, readings in criminal justice and social work, we consider whether we should replace or better support the institutions created to take care of these minority groups.
- MLS 633 The Civil War and American Culture (3)**
Using the works of authors including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frederick Douglass, Theodore Dreiser, William Dean Howells, Charles Chesnutt, Henry Adams, Henry James and others in the context of American literary conventions of writing and reading, this course traces pre- and post-war tensions in the United States which are represented and re-presented through the implicit and explicit literary dialogue contained in the course texts.
- MLS 636 Modern Times (3)**
This course will examine the ideas which have been most central in shaping the modern western world, including liberalism, capitalism and individuality, positivism, secularism and the discourse of human rights.
- MLS 637 Fable Literature (3)**
An intense, comparative and imaginative experience of one of the Western world's most stimulating literary forms, the fable.
- MLS 638 Philosophy and Literature (3)**
This course will examine select writings in literature and philosophy in the Western tradition, primarily from the 19th and 20th centuries. The goal is to illustrate the possibilities for interrelating values, modes of perception and learning which are represented in these traditions.
- MLS 639 Biomedical Science and the History of the Human Body (2-3)**
This course examines the various ways in which our understanding of the human body and our bodily experience have changed as a result of (bio)medical developments. Topics include: Anatomy in the arts; man as a machine; cosmetic surgery and racism; human tissues as marketable commodities; life-extending technologies and death.
- MLS 642 Nature and Morality (3)**
Reflections on nature as significant for morality began in ancient times and has continued to the present day—especially in the moral teaching of the Catholic Church. This course will study both classical sources (especially St. Thomas Aquinas, and current issues and applications, as these are discussed Pope John Paul II and a range of philosophers and theologians.
- MLS 647 Reflections on Commercial Life (3)**
We live in a society so deeply commercial that we take commercial forms for granted, much as we do grammatical forms: we live through them rather than reflecting on them. This course will consider how markets, money, private property, capital, and wage labor all shape our world. A variety of acute commentators on commercial societies (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, Smith, Hegel, Marx, Veblen, and Weber) will be studied with an eye toward their relevance for contemporary commercial life.
- MLS 650 The 1960's in American Theatre (3)**
Why do the 1960's continue to conjure up such vivid images and emotions for us? How is this decade portrayed on stage and film? This course will look at the theatre of the 1960's, and the impact of the cultural revolution of that period on the theatre today. We will look at the work of such playwrights as Albee, Crowley, Patrick, Rabe, and Wilson and their interpretation of this turbulent time period.
- MLS 651 On Being Native Americans (3)**
This course examines indigenous nations and peoples from historical, social, cultural, philosophical, economic and political perspectives.
- MLS 653 Expressionism and the American Theatre (3)**
This course will study the influences of European ideas and techniques on American theatre in the 1930's and 40's. With a special look at German Expressionism, we will see influences on American playwrights such as O'Neill, Rice, Williams, and on scenic designers such as Bel Geddes, Jones, and Mielziner.

- MLS 659 Culture, Literacy and Technology (3)**
The impact of new technologies on orality and literacy.
- MLS 660 Cities and America (3)**
This seminar will study the development of American cities and their political, social, economic and cultural institutions. The city of Omaha will be used as our “laboratory.”
- MLS 662 Omaha: History by Design (3)**
A study of the architectural history of Omaha and what it can tell us about the peoples and institutions of the metropolitan area, their past, present and probable future.
- MLS 664 Can Virtue Be Taught? (3)**
Can virtue be taught? is one of the oldest questions in Western philosophy and still one of the most urgent for citizens of a democracy. This course will examine the classic texts in the philosophy and psychology of moral education from the ancients (Plato and Aristotle) through the moderns (Durkheim, Piaget, and Dewey) to our contemporaries (Freire, Kohlberg, Noddings, and Lickona).
- MLS 665 Theological Virtue Ethics (3) (Same as THL 665)**
In recent decades, virtue ethics has made a comeback. This seminar will give a close reading to the principal source of Christian virtue ethics, Thomas Aquinas's Treatise on the Virtues. We will then examine a contemporary Ignatian appropriation of virtue for a Christocentric ethics for the real world today.
- MLS 666 Multiculturalism: Theory and Practice (3)**
In this course we will use literature, philosophical works and films to consider the challenge of multiculturalism in contemporary life.
- MLS 668 Foundational Texts in Christian Mysticism (3)**
Introduction to a wide variety of primary texts in medieval mysticism including works of Teresa of Avila, early Franciscan sources, and Ignatius of Loyola. Students are guided through texts and challenged to apply these texts to practical ministerial experiences.
- MLS 669 Thinking About Sport (3)**
An examination of the nature of sport, play, and game, aesthetics and sport, and selected ethical and social issues; sportsmanship, cheating, the value of competition, performance-enhancing drugs, gender issues, heroism, nationalism, and value of sport in society.
- MLS 670 The Civil Rights Movement: Perspectives from History, Law, and Politics (3)**
The civil rights movement has faded into history, and a whole generation of Americans can no longer remember what was one of the defining periods of American Public life. This course attempts to recapture and preserve the story of the ‘civil rights period,’ using biographies, narratives, law cases, and documentary films to help recall where we have been so that we can understand where we are.
- MLS 672 Text and Context: A Study of the Bible in Transmission and in Translation (3)**
The Bible, both Old Testament (or Hebrew Bible) and New Testament, has been transmitted (that is, copied in original languages) and translated (into other languages) more than any other document from antiquity. This course will focus on the social, political, historical, religious, even technological circumstances in which this activity has been conducted for more than two millennia, exploring how the texts reflect both the contexts of the copyists and translators own society and their understanding of the sacred texts with which they worked.
- MLS 673 Art and Society in the Renaissance (3)**
A study of literature and art of the Renaissance in the context of intellectual, historical, and cultural developments in England and Europe. The course highlights authors like Desiderius Erasmus, Niccolo Machiavelli, Sir Thomas More, William Shakespeare, and Miguel de Cervantes; painters like Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, Hans Holbein the Younger, and Nicolas Poussin; and the methods of New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, and Cultural Studies.

MLS 674 The Virtues (3)

An examination of the traditional virtues -- including courage, compassion, wisdom and justice -- from a variety of historical, literary and philosophical perspectives. We shall ask, What are virtues? How have they developed or changed over time? And, What if anything do they have to do with living in the modern world?

MLS 675 Economics in Literature (3)

This course features the study of the relations between literature and economics in the context of the representation of economic phenomena in selected literary works. It will seek to establish the idea that literary texts often offer important normative and prescriptive judgments connected to economic theory and practice.

MLS 676 Literature, Art and the Natural Environment (3)

This course will provide a historical and critical overview of the variety of ways in which humans have both represented and responded to the natural environment, whether it be through poetry, painting, music or film. The course will also examine the way in which scientific knowledge and different ethical and theological positions toward the environment inform both the artist's expression and the audience's reception. We will begin by examining several ancient creation myths, survey the shifts in attitude (particularly in the West) through the Renaissance and Enlightenment, and spend a large portion of the semester on modern art and the current environmental crisis. We will also examine to what extent race, gender and class affect the interaction between persons and nature as it is depicted in different artistic media. Students will be asked to prepare weekly informal written responses to readings, to do three short class presentations, and to conduct a major research project.

MLS 679 Asian Thought (3)

This interdisciplinary course focuses on the interaction between modernity and tradition in Asia. Its aim is to familiarize students with the cross-fertilization of the humanities, social sciences and religion, as well as patterns of conflict resolution in this important region.

MLS 680 Development and Change in the Third World (3)

In the post-colonial era, some one hundred states became independent and struggled with problems of state building, nation building, and economic development. What strategies have they pursued, and with what results? What are the major themes which purport to explain their relative performance? What are the obstacles facing "nation-building"? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these states in their developmental, administrative, and nation-building roles? What has been the role played by the international organizations such as the multi-national corporation, the World Bank, U.S. Foreign Aid, etc.? This course will consider these issues along with selected state case studies.

MLS 683 Ethnic Conflict, Nationalism, and Democracy (3)

Throughout the world, ethnicity and nationalism seem to have become perhaps the paramount political forces. In Africa, in Central Europe, in India, in the former Soviet Union, these forces have brought many people to (or near to) civil war or inter-state war. Simultaneously, the past 20 years have witnessed a vast expansion of democracy. What accounts for these parallel and explosive forces? Are they related? How can they be managed? What might lie ahead? This course will explore recent history and major authors on these issues.

MLS 795 Directed Independent Research (3)

Research in preparation for the final program project.

MLS 797 Directed Independent Study (1-3)

Intensive research in an area approved by the department and under the direction of a faculty member.

MLS 798 Capstone Seminar (3)

A final class in which students are responsible for organizing sessions in conjunction with the faculty instructor and presenting the results of their research.

MLS 799 Final Program Project (3)

The presentation of academic or applied research to conclude the MALS program.