

Guide to Thematic Major Proposals

The purpose of the thematic major is to provide a creative opportunity for students to build an individualized curriculum around a particular theme and to explore interrelationships between academic disciplines. Examples of some of the most recent thematic majors at the College include conservation biology, the cultural and philosophical basis of art, and American studies. Thematic majors are developed and pursued under faculty supervision. Completed proposals must be submitted no later than 10 September of the student's junior year.

Both the student and the faculty serving as the student's major advisors should consider these items when submitting a Thematic Major proposal.

- CPC does not approve thematic majors that are largely similar in content, or in objectives, to an existing academic major. Therefore, it is important for students to provide evidence that the proposed thematic major is filling a need for a major that does not already exist at W&J.
- How does the proposed thematic major differ from a “thematic emphasis?” Remember that thematic emphases require fewer courses and are built on the student’s current major. The proposal should provide a rationale and evidence that demonstrates that a thematic emphasis is not adequate to provide the student with the academic experiences they (and their advisors) believe necessary to fully explore a particular field of study at the undergraduate level.
- How is the thematic major interdisciplinary? This is particularly important if a thematic major is meant to expand on an existing program.
- Thematic major proposals must include evidence of consultation with program directors and relevant faculty if the thematic major builds on an existing program that does not offer a major—this may extend beyond the faculty serving as the thematic major advisors. For example, a student who wants to create a thematic major in bioethics might be expected to consult with faculty in the Philosophy and Biology Departments who have expertise in biomedical ethics. CPC may reject or send back proposals where this consultation has not taken place.
- The proposal should include concise rationales (e.g., one or two sentences) for courses selected to fulfill the thematic major.
- The academic objectives of the proposed major need to be clear. What knowledge and skills will be gained from the major? How might this help the student in the next phase of their academic or professional life?
- Where appropriate, the thematic major proposal should address aspects of how written and oral communication, as well as the use of technology, may be integrated into the major.

Students: Please complete all of the sections in the attached form, reading the directions for each section carefully. Consultation with your faculty advisors is important and they should be seeing and providing feedback on your proposal prior to submission to CPC. If you have any questions, contact the chair of the Curriculum and Programs Committee.

Date Submitted: _____

This form is to be used to propose a thematic major. Submit an electronic copy of this form with signatures included and an unofficial copy of your transcript to the Curriculum & Program Committee (curriculum@washjeff.edu) no later than 10 September of your junior year.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Student Name	
Student Signature	
Anticipated Graduation Date <i>(e.g. May 2020, December 2021)</i>	
Name of Thematic Major	

Identify three members of the faculty who are willing and qualified to serve as major advisors; one of these should be designated as the primary advisor. Advisors must be from at least two departments or programs in the College.

	Name	Department	Signature (on hardcopy only)
Primary Advisor			
Advisor			
Advisor			

A. Definition of Proposed Thematic Major

Provide a definition of the proposed thematic major as an academic course of study. This definition should be sufficiently detailed to provide guidance for determining whether a course, internship, or other academic experience falls within the scope of the thematic major. It should also illustrate that the thematic major is interdisciplinary in nature and reflects the spirit of the liberal arts.

B. Rationale for Pursuing Thematic Major

Provide a narrative describing your reasons and necessity for pursuing this thematic major. This should include reflections on why a combination of existing programs (majors, minors, concentrations) will not satisfy your intended purposes.

C. Comparable Major(s)

If possible, indicate at least one other institution that offers a major comparable to the proposed thematic major. Include the official name of the major and a link to the page of requirements where possible. If no comparable majors can be identified at other institutions, please explain briefly your overall rationale for the courses and experiences you've included as part of the thematic major.

D. Thematic Major Objectives

Briefly describe the academic objectives that you will pursue through the completion of this thematic major. This description should identify the knowledge or skills that you will be able to demonstrate upon successful completion of the coursework making up your thematic major.

E. Course Selection and Proposed Timeline

List the courses that will constitute the thematic major, grouped by whether they have already been completed or not. A minimum of 10 courses must be given, though typical Thematic Majors encompass between 12 and 16 courses, including independent studies and a capstone. Thematic majors must span multiple departments or programs within the College and represent an interdisciplinary study of a topic. The program should demonstrate breadth as well as depth and introductory-level courses should be held to a minimum. Note that you may indicate that some courses are options to be selected between depending on course availability and scheduling.

Completed and In-Progress Courses		
Prefix and Number	Course Name	Term

H. Integration of Discipline-Specific Oral Communication (2016 Catalog and later)

*All majors must include the equivalent of one class period dedicated to instruction in **discipline-specific oral communication**. They must also include at least two communication assignments factoring into a student's grade, each being a minimum of five minutes in length if a presentation or a minimum of ten minutes in length if a dialog (such as a formal debate, interview, or leading a class discussion). Indicate how this requirement is met by the proposed thematic major.*

I. Integration of Discipline-Specific Information Technology (2016 Catalog and later)

*All majors must include the equivalent of one class period dedicated to instruction in **discipline-specific information technology**. They must also include at least two assignments factoring into a student's grade that require the mastery of relevant information technology skills. Indicate how this requirement is met by the proposed thematic major.*

J. Integrative Capstone Experience

All majors must include a capstone experience that integrates knowledge and skills learned while completing the major through a culminating project appropriate to the field. This experience should require you to draw on skills and knowledge obtained in more than one course within the thematic major, and ideally other educational experiences at the College. Present a plan for your capstone experience and the means by which the capstone will be evaluated. Your plan may include a special independent study project, a senior thesis, an internship, or an equivalent academic experience.

K. Additional Content (optional)

If there is any additional information you would like the Curriculum and Program Committee to consider in its review of your proposal, please include it below.