

# Handbook of Graduate Liberal Studies

2024-2025 Academic Year



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# OVERVIEW

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## Introduction

Welcome to the Handbook for Graduate Liberal Studies at Rutgers University Camden. We are excited to have you as part of our vibrant learning community.

This Handbook lays out in one convenient place all the program's basic information, requirements, and policies. Links are also provided to all important forms. Students are encouraged to acquaint themselves with the Handbook early in their studies and refer to it thereafter whenever questions arise.

The following strives to be completely consistent with the extant rules and procedures of Rutgers University. In cases of conflict, however, general Rutgers University policies take precedence. These policies can be found in the following [Rutgers Graduate Handbook](#).

For any questions or other matters, please reach out to us!

*Stuart Charmé, Graduate Liberal Studies Director.* Stuart is Professor of Religion at Rutgers University Camden. He can be contacted for advice on any matters of procedure, policy, and academics. Email [scharme@camden.rutgers.edu](mailto:scharme@camden.rutgers.edu), call 856-225-6237, or visit his [website](#).

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*Tina Crafton, Writing Mentor.* Tina is Instructor in Liberal Studies at Rutgers University Camden. She can be contacted for advice on all matters related to writing and in particular to the capstone project. Email [tinabean@camden.rutgers.edu](mailto:tinabean@camden.rutgers.edu).

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## Aims of the Program

Our Graduate Liberal Studies program, established in 1994, provides the opportunity for advanced online study through interdisciplinary engagement. It offers a broad range of courses in literature, history, philosophy, religion, the social sciences, and the arts that are taught by highly qualified faculty at a top public research institution.

The program is designed for mature students with diverse work and life experiences. Students come from across the United States and abroad and share a passion for reading, discussion, broadening intellectual horizons, and exploring ideas in a serious and careful way. Some attend to gain advanced credentials for a career, others for intellectual stimulation, perhaps after retirement, others still to develop scholarly interests. All courses are kept small to maximize interaction and in-depth exploration.

We offer two courses of study: a 31-credit Masters in Liberal Studies (MALS) and a 13-credit Certificate in Graduate Liberal Studies (CELS). It is also possible to take courses on a non-matriculated basis. Students can switch between these options if they wish. While the courses offered by the program are entirely online, students living nearby can also opt to substitute a select number of in-person courses from a variety of other graduate programs across the Rutgers campus.

As one of the preeminent graduate programs in Liberal Studies in the country, we provide cutting-edge and primarily asynchronous online instruction that facilitates critical thinking, strong writing, communication skills, and the sheer joy of learning. Graduates have gone on to prestigious doctoral programs, creative artistic work, and enhanced or new careers.

## Learning Goals

By the time Graduate Liberal Studies students receive their degrees, they will have improved their ability to:

- write in a variety of academic genres, including expository essays, critical analysis, and research papers
- analyze and interpret texts in a variety of academic and literary genres
- think critically about a social and cultural issues using perspectives derived from more than one academic discipline
- demonstrate effective written and oral communication
- be familiar with the central issues and methods of analysis in a variety of disciplines
- conceptualize, research, and prepare a substantive capstone project



## Online Education

If you have never taken an online course before, it is important to understand that they are run differently from face-to face classes.

Online MALS classes are asynchronous, meaning that students participate in the same activities and discussions but at different times. Asynchronous online learning is much more pedagogically sound than simply meeting online. You are able to be fully involved in the class no matter what your schedule is. And you can focus on interactive and stimulating discussions that progressively advance your engagement with the materials, the instructor, and the other students.

The typical online Graduate Liberal Studies class has a similar structure each week. At the beginning of the week, let's say Sunday, you log in to the course website and download and read the assignments for that week. (You can also see the schedule for the whole semester if you want to read ahead). You may also watch a short video lecture from the instructor or other visual materials.

Then, throughout the week, you engage with your classmates and professor in an online written discussion. Typically, you complete an approximately 500-word response to a prompt by Wednesday, then provide shorter reactions to the responses of at least two other students by Friday. There may also be informal discussion among the students in the class and with the professor. Then the cycle begins again for the next week.

There may in addition be a final paper in which you develop an idea from the course in a longer format. Such assignments are developed with the assistance of the professor and sometimes with feedback from other students.

Online courses are not easier than in-person courses and most students report that they require about the same amount of time and effort.

## Applying to the Program

Apply via the online [application form](#).

For questions or to check on your application status, check with the Graduate Liberal Studies Director.

### *Application Requirements*

Masters (MALS) and Certificate (CELS) applicants must submit the following:

- undergraduate transcript(s) (3.0 GPA preferred)



- personal statement of 1-2 pages about why you are applying, what your intellectual interests are, and what you hope to gain from participating in the program
- CV or resume
- *optional*: up to two letters of recommendation from former professors or supervisors
- *optional*: writing sample such as an undergraduate paper or professional report

The GRE is *not* required.

### *Application Deadlines*

Fall semester: August 1  
 Spring semester: December 1  
 Summer session: May 1

### *Scholarships*

All admitted students are automatically considered for academic merit scholarships based on their records. Note, however, that scholarships can only be used only in semesters in which you are registered for at least 6 credits.

### *Online versus Non-Online Applications*

- Non-New Jersey residents must apply for the “M.A.-Online” program.
- New Jersey residents should apply for the “M.A.” program, as this permits you to receive in-state tuition while still being able to take as many classes online as you wish, or a mixture of online and in-person classes.

### *Non-Matriculation Applications*

It is possible to enroll in individual classes on a non-matriculated basis. Non-matriculated students still need to complete a basic application to the program, as above. Non-matriculated students may take up to 12 credits. You may change status to matriculated at any time with a special [change of status form](#).



# CURRICULUM

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## Masters in Liberal Studies (MALS)

The Masters in Liberal Studies (MALS) program requires a total of 31 credits. These include the following:

- “Introduction to Graduate Liberal Studies” (1 credit), required of all students\*
- Nine regular classes (27 credits)
- A capstone research project (3 credits), required of all students

(\*Note: “Introduction to Graduate Liberal Studies” is not required for students who enrolled prior to May 2022).

In addition, MALS students are required to satisfy the following subject area requirements:

- courses in at least three different academic disciplines
- at least two courses (6 credits) in humanities (art, history, literature, philosophy, religion, etc.)
- at least two courses (6 credits) in social sciences (anthropology, psychology, political science, sociology, criminal justice, etc.)
- one course on either non-western cultures or issues pertaining to gender and/or minorities

Students enrolled in the on-campus MALS program have the option, in addition to our regularly scheduled online courses, of taking in-person courses at Rutgers Camden, which they can do in one of two ways:

- You can take graduate courses in other departments such as English, History, Childhood Studies, Criminal Justice, Sociology, or Psychology. (Courses that primarily teach professional skills are not eligible for MALS credit). Students must request permission from both the course instructor and the Graduate Liberal Studies Director to take such a course.
- You can also take advanced undergraduate courses for graduate credit, subject to the following rules: (1) the instructor provides additional work to complete for graduate credit, which is described in writing for approval by the Graduate Liberal Studies Director; (2) you complete a form requesting “G” (graduate) credit ([see form here](#)); and (3) no more than two undergraduate courses are taken for MALS credit.



## Certificate in Graduate Liberal Studies (CELS)

The Certificate in Graduate Liberal Studies (CELS) program requires a total of 13 credits. These include the required “Introduction to Graduate Liberal Studies” course (1 credit), plus four regular classes (12 credits). All courses for CELS must be taken online. There is no capstone project. There are no subject area requirements or academic concentrations.

CELS students may transfer into the MALS program at any time they wish. Conversely, MALS students may also transfer into CELS. To transfer either way, contact the Director.

## Non-Matriculated Students

Students who gain admittance to the program may enroll as non-matriculated students, meaning they are in neither MALS nor CELS but simply taking courses. Non-matriculated students may take up to 12 credits. You may change your status from non-matriculated to matriculated student with the approval of the Director by filling in a [Change of Status Non-Matriculated to Matriculate Form](#).

## Academic Concentrations

MALS (but not CELS or non-matriculated) students have the option, if they wish, to tailor their program to an academic concentration, which is noted on their transcript at graduation. A concentration is not required. The requirements for completing a concentration are in addition to the other requirements for the MALS degree. If a student wishes to declare a concentration, it must be done no later than when the capstone proposal is submitted by submitting the [Academic Concentration Form](#).

Each concentration requires four courses (12 credits) from the lists below. Other appropriate courses may be substituted with prior written permission of the program Director. In addition, your capstone project (3 credits) must be related to the concentration area. The remaining credits for MALS may be used to satisfy distributional requirements.

### *Philosophy and Religion*

- 56:606:622 Gender, Sexuality, and Religion
- 56:606:641 Psychology of Religious Beliefs, Values, and Symbols
- 56:606:642 Gods and Monsters: Understanding Power
- 56:606:642 Philosophy of Social Identities
- 56:606:643 Evil
- 56:606:644 Contemporary Moral Issues
- 56:606:645 Environmental Ethics
- 56:606:646 Philosophy and Film





56:606:647 Biomedical Ethics  
56:606:649 Philosophical Perspectives on the Good Life

*World History and Politics*

56:606:622 Politics of Terrorism  
56:606:623 Middle East History and Politics  
56:606:624 Empire and Decolonization  
56:606:626 World Politics  
56:606:671 History of Global Health

*American Studies*

56:606:534 History, Culture, and Politics of the 1960s  
56:606:561 Culture Wars in the United States  
56:606:612 From Bop to Pop: History of Jazz  
56:606:631 Myth and Meaning in America  
56:606:632 Sickness and Health in American History  
56:606:661 Women, Men and Work

*Creative Arts and Literature*

56:606:608 Love Story in Contemporary Literature  
56:606:608 Disney Films: Analyzing Adaptations  
56:606:609 New Media Art  
56:606:609 Conceptual Art: Strategies and Movements  
56:606:610 Fiction Workshop: Methods of Fiction  
56:606:611 An Immersion into Experience: Writing from Life  
56:606:612 From Bop to Pop: History of Jazz  
56:606:614 Multi-Genre Writing Workshop  
56:606:681 World Music

*Health, Wellness, and the Good Life*

56:606:632 Sickness and Health in American Culture  
56:606:641 Psychology of Religious Beliefs, Values, and Symbols  
56:606:645 Environmental Ethics  
56:606:651 Positive Psychology—On Happiness and the Good Life  
56:606:647 Biomedical Ethics  
56:606:649 Philosophical Perspectives on the Good Life  
56:606:671 History of Global Health



## Capstone Project

Every MALS student is required to complete a capstone study as the final project in the program. In most cases, the capstone project is an interdisciplinary study of approximately 25-35 pages in length that demonstrates graduate level research and writing skills. The topic should be selected in consultation with the MALS Writing Mentor and a faculty Advisor. You should begin to think about your capstone project at least two semesters prior to graduation.

Creative, artistic, or other non-traditional capstone projects are possible, though they must be accompanied by a 10-15-page discussion of the conception, context, and meaning of the project. Students interested in this option should discuss it with the Director.

You will only need to register for Capstone Research (56:606:689) once, even if you take more than one semester to complete your capstone.

The following steps for completing the capstone are required:

### *Step 1: Enroll in the Capstone Tutorial*

The Capstone Tutorial is a non-credit online course that guides you through the process of preparing your capstone. It also includes discussion forums where you can discuss any issues that arise in research and writing your capstone with other MALS students and with the MALS writing assistant. To enroll in the Capstone Tutorial simply send an email request to the Director or the Writing Mentor at least two semesters before you plan to graduate. You will take the first half of the Capstone Tutorial two semesters before graduating, and the second half in the final semester before graduating as you complete the capstone itself.

### *Step 2: Choose a topic and a faculty Advisor*

Think about a general topic or question you would like to explore arising out of your interests and coursework. Then choose an Advisor you would like to work with, if needed with the help of the Director. The Advisor should be an expert in some facet of your topic, perhaps someone you've already taken a MALS course with or perhaps another faculty member elsewhere at Rutgers.

### *Step 3: Complete a capstone proposal*

A capstone proposal has two elements. (1) Once you have settled on a general topic and have discussed it with a potential advisor, write a 300-400-word description of the topic you will explore. This description should involve an explanation of the capstone's guiding



question and an annotated list of at least five good sources that you plan to use in answering it. (2) Submit a [Topic and Advisor Selection Form](#). This form generates a Special Permission Number that you need to then register for the 3-credit course Capstone Research. The deadline for submitting this form is November 15 for May graduations, April 15 for October graduations, and July 15 for January graduations.

*Step 4: Write a first draft of your capstone*

During your final semester in the program, and in consultation with your Advisor, start the research and writing of your capstone. Register for the 3-credit Capstone Research course. Ideally, you will have completed substantial research into your project prior to this final semester. You can also seek writing assistance from the Writing Mentor. It is your responsibility to meet regularly with your Advisor and make sure you are receiving the guidance you need. You are required to submit a first draft of your capstone to your Advisor by April 1 for May graduation, July 1 for October graduation, or November 15 for January graduation.

*Step 5: Complete a final draft of your capstone*

A capstone project will usually require several drafts in response to your Advisor's suggestions. Make sure to leave yourself plenty of time to undertake needed revisions. The very final draft of your capstone is due to your Advisor by May 1 for May graduation, September 1 for October graduation, and January 2 for January graduation. Failure to complete drafts by these deadlines means that your graduation may be delayed.

*Step 6: Submit a final copy of your capstone to the Rutgers Library*

Once your Advisor has approved your final capstone and all corrections and revisions are complete, the final step is to upload your finished capstone paper to the Rutgers Library. Instructions about the proper style for your finished capstone and other graduation matters may be found on the Graduate School's page of [graduation instructions](#).



# POLICIES

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## Transfer Credit

Up to 10 graduate credits (3 courses) with grades of B or better may be transferred from other graduate programs either within Rutgers or at other universities, with the approval of the Director. Professional training courses in fields like education, social work, business, or nursing are generally not eligible for transfer credit. Transfer credit is awarded only after a student has complete 12 credits in our program.

To apply, submit a [Transfer Credit Application](#).

## Transient Credit

Up to 10 graduate credits (3 courses) with grades of B or better may be taken as transient credit, with the approval of the Director. Transient credits are courses taken at other academic institutions (as well as other Schools at Rutgers outside the School of Arts and Sciences) while enrolled in our program. It is required for transient credit that you receive special permission in advance of taking the course. Transient credit is granted only in exceptional circumstances. It is not granted retroactively.

To apply, submit a [Transient Credit Application](#).

## Dual-Degree Program

The dual-degree program allows undergraduate students at Rutgers University to combine a Bachelors degree in any field with credits toward the Masters degree in Graduate Liberal Studies (MALS). Dual-degree students save time and money by enrolling in up to three Graduate Liberal Studies courses (up to 9 credits) during their undergraduate senior year. These courses count toward both your undergraduate degree and your MALS degree. After completing your Bachelors degree, you are then automatically admitted into the MALS program to complete your remaining credits for a MALS degree.

To apply, submit a [MALS Dual Degree Application](#).

Once admitted, you will need to complete a [Dual Degree G-Prefix Approval Form](#) for each undergraduate course that you wish to count for graduate credit. These courses are charged at the undergraduate tuition rate. Independent Study courses are not included under this policy.

For any questions, contact the Graduate Liberal Studies Director.



## **G-Prefix Approval of Undergraduate Courses**

Graduate students may enroll in up to two upper-level (300 or 400 level) undergraduate courses for graduate credit with approval of the Graduate Liberal Studies Director. Approval must be gained prior to the semester in which the student enrolls in the course. Independent Study courses are not included under this policy.

To apply, submit a [Graduate G-Prefix Approval Form](#).

## **Re-Enrollment**

Students are expected to be registered continuously in the Graduate School (through coursework or matriculation-continued). If you have taken any semesters off (not including the summer semester), you must apply for re-enrollment. This requires approval of the Director.

To apply, submit a [Re-enrollment Form](#).

## **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is taken seriously by the University and by the Department and applies to everyone. Sanctions for violations can include, among others, failure of assignment, failure of course, or suspension or expulsion from the University. It is important that you familiarize yourself with Rutgers University policy on academic integrity. If you have any questions, contact the Director.

Here is Rutgers' [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

## **Academic Warnings**

Each term the Program Committee reviews the scholastic record of all enrolled students and makes decisions regarding warnings, probationary status, or dismissal of students in academic difficulty. The Graduate Liberal Studies Director notifies students of any action taken. After the first grade below B, a student will receive an academic warning. A second grade below B will result in a final warning and being placed on academic probation. A third grade below B will result in dismissal from the program. No more than two grades below B may be counted toward a graduate degree.

You have the right in such cases to make a student appeal. Student appeals must be presented in writing to the Graduate Liberal Studies Director within one month of the decision(s). Acceptable grounds for appeal are (1) technical error and/or (2) new information and/or (3) extenuating circumstances. Students are allowed to meet with the



committee and are permitted to be represented by an adviser from within the university community. In consultation with the other members of the Program Committee and all parties of the dispute, the Graduate Liberal Studies Director proposes a resolution to the matter. While such action usually is final, a student may appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School-Camden in cases where he or she is dissatisfied with the resolution.

## **Complaint Resolution**

### *Complaints about Grades*

A student with a complaint about a grade must submit the complaint in writing to the course instructor within one week of the receipt of the grade. In the event of an unsatisfactory resolution of the problem, the student may appeal in writing, within a further one-week period, to the Graduate Liberal Studies Director, or designee selected by the Program Committee, whose decision is final.

### *Complaints about the Graduate Liberal Studies Program*

If problems arise concerning the Graduate Liberal Studies program, the University will make every effort to resolve any grievances, complaints, or concerns in an expeditious, fair, and amicable manner. If an issue cannot be resolved by the Graduate Liberal Studies Director or the appropriate Dean at Rutgers-Camden, you may choose to file a complaint with Rutgers' [Office of the Ombudsperson for Students](#). If resolution has still not been achieved, you may then register your complaint with your state of residence commission on higher education. Click here to see the [complaint process for each state](#).

## **Withdrawal**

If you wish to withdraw from the MALS or CELS program, you will need to submit an online Withdrawal Form. Please find this form and instructions at the following University Registrar site: [Withdrawal from All Courses](#). It is highly recommended that prior to withdrawal you discuss your situation with the Graduate Liberal Studies Director.

## **Graduation**

Congratulations! In order to graduate, there are two more forms you need to fill out: (1) an Online Diploma Application and (2) an Application for Admission to Candidacy. These forms, along with complete instructions for graduating, are found at the following site: [Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Graduation](#). This site also includes instructions for uploading your Capstone Project to the Rutgers Library Depository. It also lists the deadlines for submission of each form, which are approximately two-three months prior to graduation itself.

