

# LIBERAL ARTS INDIVIDUALIZED, MLA

Students in the Master of Liberal Arts (MLA) degree program have the rare opportunity to develop their own concentration in the liberal arts from courses across the University. As an MLA student, you design an individualized curriculum of nine graduate-level courses that center on a particular theme that interests you, culminating in an individual capstone project. The capstone is a large-scale academic project of your own choosing, created with the guidance of your professors and advisors. Previous capstones include memoirs, poetry cycles, and research papers. The process of developing your capstone both tests and celebrates your education at Penn, and can be used to demonstrate the value of your time here to employers or graduate schools.

**For more information:** <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/lps/graduate/mla>  
(<https://www.sas.upenn.edu/lps/graduate/mla/>)

## Curriculum

### Individualized curriculum

The range of courses you can take means that you can construct a plan of study at the precise nexus of your interests, or sample several different fields before settling on an ongoing focus. The process itself of curating your own curriculum is one of the most valuable aspects of the MLA program. In doing so, you learn how to listen to your own instincts and curiosities, as well as strategically direct your own development as a person and as an academic or professional in your field.

During the process of choosing your courses, you'll be supported by the Program Director and our administrative staff. We take an intensive student-by-student approach, offering the open conversation and long-term advising relationships that you need to help you create your MLA path.

### MLA course requirements and Proseminars

Your Master of Liberal Arts degree curriculum consists of nine graduate-level courses. At least seven of these courses must be taken in the School of Arts and Sciences. MLA students are not limited to enrollment in MLA program courses. As long as permits are not required, you can take any graduate-level course in the College of Liberal and Professional Studies and the School of Arts and Sciences, as well as schools throughout the University, such as the Annenberg School for Communication, the Graduate School of Education, and the School of Social Policy & Practice.

Of the nine courses in your individualized curriculum, one to three of them must be MLA Proseminars. A Proseminar is a small, intensive class that asks you to integrate research, writing, discussion and other methods of inquiry. The small class size fosters thoughtful conversation and debate and provides a powerful environment for intellectual growth. We offer multiple Proseminars each semester, and the topics change every semester as well.

### MLA certificates

While earning your Master of Liberal Arts degree, you have the opportunity to earn a certificate in one of several subject areas, including Latin American Studies, Urban Studies, Cinema Studies, and more. Each certificate program consists of an interdisciplinary set of classes, which was chosen by faculty members to help students explore and master a

given topic. Please visit the certificate page (<https://www.sas.upenn.edu/lps/graduate/mla/certificates/>) to learn more.

The degree and major requirements displayed are intended as a guide for students entering in the Fall of 2025 and later. Students should consult with their academic program regarding final certifications and requirements for graduation.