MASTER OF ARTS IN LIBERAL STUDIES

Program Description

The Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) degree program enables individuals to pursue interdisciplinary studies at the graduate level. Courses provide students the opportunity to extend the best experiences of baccalaureate liberal education to the graduate level.

Students admitted to the program will be encouraged to select one of the graduate certificate programs or informal focus areas listed below and will develop a program of study with the cooperation of the assigned advisor.

- Bioethics (graduate certificate)
- Black Studies (graduate certificate or informal focus area)
- Film and Media Studies (informal focus area)
- Gerontology (graduate certificate)
- Holocaust Studies (graduate certificate)
- Humanities Consortium (informal focus area)
- Medieval and Early Modern Studies (graduate certificate)
- Women's and Gender Studies (informal focus area)

Alternatively, students with a strong interest in a different interdisciplinary area of study within the College of Arts and Sciences may submit a statement indicating interest in designing an individualized plan of study. In order to ensure that courses to support a proposed individualized plan of study are available at UMKC, students who want to pursue this option should suggest a list of courses offered in the College of Arts and Sciences that could contribute to their desired area of study. Students wishing to pursue this option should contact the MALS advisor for assistance developing this list of courses.

Student diplomas will list the degree as a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies. The subject field of approved graduate certificates will be designated on a student transcript. Students pursuing informal focus areas with the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies will not have these subject designations on their transcript.

Admission to the Program

Individuals admitted to the program must have a baccalaureate or equivalent degree and mature academic interests. A minimum undergraduate 3.25 GPA is desirable but can be offset by professional and career accomplishments outside academe.

Individuals applying for admission should submit, in addition to the UMKC application, the following documents:

- a statement of purpose in the form of a personal essay of approximately 1,000 words outlining the focus area the applicant wishes to pursue, reasons for applying, and academic plans and goals. Any applicant who does not choose one of the specific certificate programs or informal focus areas listed for the MALS program should also include a statement indicating interest in designing an individualized plan of study. Such a statement should indicate the proposed area of study and a list of courses offered in the College of Arts and Sciences that would contribute to the area of study.
- a sample of recent academic writing
- 3 letters of recommendation

These documents (except the UMKC application) should be sent directly to the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program, UMKC, 5121 Rockhill Road, Cockefair 106, Kansas City, MO 64110.

Prior to submitting an application, prospective students should speak with the program advisor or a member of the faculty who works in their chosen focus area.

The deadline to apply for Fall Semester is March 1. The deadline to apply for Spring Semester is November 1.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students graduating from this program will:

- be able to identify and articulate scholarly problems and questions based on evidence and approaches from more than one disciplinary area at an advanced level.
- be able to gather and organize the primary source materials and raw data needed to answer these questions at an advanced level.
- be able to analyze relevant primary source materials and raw data to create a coherent answer to a scholarly problem or question at an advanced level.
- be able to critically appraise scholarly conversations in multiple fields, create a coherent interpretation, and take a critical position in these debates.
be able to effectively communicate, at an advanced level, the results of their work via either expository prose or a creative work to an audience that does not specialize in their area of study or share their disciplinary perspective.

Requirements for Completion of the Degree

The degree is a 36 credit hour program. Generally, each participant’s plan of study will consist of three parts.

Program participants begin by enrolling in A&S 5509. On completion of this required three hour introductory seminar, participants earn 30 credit hours based on the study plan associated with their graduate certificate program, informal focus area, or their individual study plan. At the conclusion of the program, individuals enroll in a required three hour capstone seminar, A&S 5520.

Please consult the MALS website at cas.umkc.edu/MALS for advising worksheets for each of the graduate certificate programs and informal focus areas that can be pursued in conjunction with the MALS.

A written thesis is not required, but individuals who wish to complete a thesis project may apply three credit hours of A&S 5540 toward their degree requirements. An individual who works well independently and who has a particular interest that lends itself to detailed research is especially encouraged to consider the thesis option. With the thesis option, the participant will select a faculty advisor who will direct the plan of study and research.

Two courses (6 hours) may be taken from another school at the university outside of the College of Arts and Sciences. No more than 12 hours at the 400-level (or 300-level when permitted by the department) may be applied to the plan of study.

Relationship of the MALS to Interdisciplinary Doctoral Degrees

The College of Arts and Sciences has a strong tradition of interdisciplinary studies at both the baccalaureate and doctoral levels.

The Master of Arts in Liberal Studies degree continues the tradition of interdisciplinary work in the college at the intermediate level between baccalaureate and doctoral work. In a few cases, students completing this degree may find the transition to doctoral work as the appropriate next step. However, students should recognize that the degree is not designed to provide students in the program with specific subject skills usually associated with targeted career objectives in traditional research areas.

Students interested in coordinating their M.A. in Liberal Studies coursework with future doctoral work at UMKC are strongly encouraged to make this intent known at the outset of their work. Without initial planning conducted with a committee of doctoral faculty, a student’s master’s coursework may not be appropriate to later doctoral studies.