

# THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM: URGENT CHALLENGES CURRICULUM

---

The Urgent Challenges Curriculum—Hiram College’s general education program—sets up students to integrate their skills, interests, knowledge, and interdisciplinary experiences throughout their learning at Hiram. The general education program at Hiram College is not a disparate list of courses, but an interrelated course of study that addresses enduring and topical challenges, integrates learning across disciplinary boundaries, enhances learning through non-classroom experiences, and weaves skill development throughout the student’s years of study at Hiram.

Through this curriculum, students will be exposed to a broad range of topics and perspectives, enhancing their understanding of the world, and preparing them to apply what they have learned to the urgent challenges of our times, first at Hiram College, and later during their personal and professional lives.

The Urgent Challenges Curriculum comprises approximately one third of a student’s college experience. A brief description of each component follows:

1. The First-Year Program (<https://catalog.hiram.edu/undergraduate/academic-program-core-curriculum/first-year-program/>): The First-Year Program serves as the first articulation of the Urgent Challenges Curriculum’s purpose and intended learning outcomes.
  - a. In the fall *Enduring Questions Seminar* (4 credits), students explore a fundamental enduring question, theme, or topic as they acclimate to college-level inquiry, critical thinking, and written communication. The periodic common hour provides a shared intellectual experience grounded in a common reading and an ethics theme. It also introduces students to reflective learning through Hiram Connect (<https://catalog.hiram.edu/undergraduate/academic-program-core-curriculum/connect/>).
  - b. The second semester’s *Addressing Urgent Questions Seminar* (4 credits) engages students in interdisciplinary thinking and problem solving as they consider an urgent question of the times through different disciplinary perspectives. While practicing careful gathering and use of information, students will also advance their written and oral communication skills. This course serves as a bridge to core courses and to the major degree programs.
2. The Core (<https://catalog.hiram.edu/undergraduate/academic-program-core-curriculum/core-curriculum/>): Hiram’s Core asks students to engage broadly with knowledge, practice, and ideas, both through varied disciplinary approaches (Ways of Knowing) and through the study of ethics and citizenship (Ways of Responsible Citizenship).
  - a. **Ways of Knowing** (up to 20 credits): Hiram’s Core provides students with the breadth of knowledge and with an intellectual experience that focuses on methods for acquiring and analyzing knowledge. Each of the courses in Ways of Knowing responds to the goals of this segment of the core from its unique lens, whether it be creative methods, interpretive methods, modeling methods, experimental scientific methods, or methods of social and cultural analysis.
    - b. **Ways of Responsible Citizenship** (up to 12 credits): The goals are to prepare students to adapt to a changing world. Each course in this segment of the core curriculum provides the opportunity for students to demonstrate understanding of the values and attitudes of people in another culture, of the diversity of the US society, and of how values are discovered, articulated, and justified.
3. Urgent Challenges Seminar (<https://catalog.hiram.edu/undergraduate/academic-program-core-curriculum/urgent-challenges-seminar/>): This interdisciplinary, team-taught course (4 credits) normally taken in the junior year will focus on broad questions that speak to the problems in our contemporary world. Working collectively, students will engage with and address an urgent challenge from different disciplinary perspectives, using a problem-based learning approach.
4. Hiram Connect (<https://catalog.hiram.edu/undergraduate/academic-program-core-curriculum/connect/>): As the name implies Hiram Connect allows students to make connections between their courses and high impact out of class experiences. They examine their progress through Hiram at four intervals.
5. Capstone Experience (<https://catalog.hiram.edu/undergraduate/academic-program-core-curriculum/capstone-experience/>): Before graduation, students will complete a capstone project which draws upon four years of the Hiram Urgent Challenges Curriculum and their major program. Every student will complete a directed experience (minimum of 1 credit hour) which will allow them to work independently and to integrate aspects of the major program in a coherent way.