

THE AVENUE EXPERIENCE

The Avenue Experience is a college-wide program that inspires the work at Saint Mary's both in and out of the classroom. The Avenue Experience provides the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that prepare Saint Mary's students to lead with distinction, and flourish in their communities and careers. The Avenue competencies are developed across campus through curriculum, co-curriculum, student support services, residential community, faith formation, and spiritual life.

The Avenue Competencies:

- **Think critically and creatively, and communicate ideas with style and precision**
- **Promote justice and human dignity, with special attention to the experiences of women and marginalized communities**
- **Develop personal and professional vocation across four years, through classes, academic and career advising, and experiential**
- **Demonstrate civic responsibility and the ability to dialogue across difference**

Integrating Your Entire Education with the General Education Curriculum

The Saint Mary's College General Education Curriculum serves as the unifying educational space where students begin to develop the college-wide competencies associated with the Avenue Experience. Completed over the course of four years of study, the program strives to provide foundational learning experiences to all students that reflect our philosophy and purpose as a Catholic, women's, liberal arts institution, embracing the well-established principle that the breadth provided by general education complements the depth provided by a student's major.

For students, this makes learning both more intentional (in knowing where a particular educational experience is supposed to take them, they can notice more along the way) and more integrated (they can see both before and during their education how each part of the curriculum assembles into a larger whole).

With these principles as a guide, our general education curriculum is built around clusters of courses in key areas associated with broad learning in the liberal arts in a Catholic women's college context.

Below is a brief description of the goals of each area of focus and links to courses available in the Fall semester for first year students.

Curricular Areas of Focus

Religious Studies, Theology, and Philosophy

• Religious Traditions I

The study of religion helps you explore big questions about meaning, faith, and justice. In your **first RLST course**, you'll grow in religious literacy by examining a range of religious texts, traditions, and practices, so you can engage thoughtfully with diverse beliefs in a complex world. See available courses. (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/religious-traditions-i/>)

• Religious Traditions II

In your second RLST course, you'll explore the rich and diverse Catholic Christian tradition through a scholarly lens, gaining a deeper understanding of its beliefs, practices, and historical development. You'll also learn how this tradition continues to shape and respond to the world today. The vibrant participation of students of all faiths (or no faith) enriches the discussions in these courses.

• Philosophy

In your **Philosophy** course, you'll engage with fundamental questions like: What is a good life? Does God exist? What do we owe to others and the world around us? In the process, you'll be challenged to form your own perspectives and learn from the perspectives of others. See available courses. (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/philosophy/>)

Literary and Historical Inquiry

• Literary Inquiry

Learn to read literature not just as stories, but as powerful reflections of human experience. In your **Literature** course, you'll explore how plot, structure, and genre shape meaning while using critical perspectives to engage with issues of justice. See available courses. (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/literary-inquiry/>)

• Historical Inquiry

Studying history isn't about memorizing dates—it's about understanding how and why societies change over time. In your **History** course, you'll explore primary sources and historical methods to uncover the forces that have shaped cultures, politics, and economies, including how power has influenced different groups throughout history. See available courses (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/historical-inquiry/>).

Languages and Cultures

• Modern Languages I

See available courses

• Modern Languages II

Learning a world language helps you understand and engage with different cultures so you become more globally aware. In your Modern Language courses, you'll develop foundational skills in a language while exploring the geography, history, and traditions of those who speak it.

Data, Analysis, and Problem Solving

• Mathematics

In your **Math** course, you'll grow in the skills needed to break down complex problems and find solutions. From personal finances to understanding statistics in the news, you'll need mathematical literacy to interpret data, solve problems, and draw conclusions. See available courses. (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/mathematics/>)

- **Natural Science**

In your **Natural Science** course, you'll explore the natural world, analyzing empirical data and identifying the limits of scientific analysis. You'll learn how science shapes our understanding of the world, while developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. See available courses. (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/natural-science/>)

- **Social Science**

In your **Social Science** course, you'll learn about human behavior, systems, and institutions, gaining insight into how societies function and change. You'll also explore the impact of inequality and exclusion on some groups. See available courses. (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/social-science/>)

Creative and Artistic Expression (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/creative-and-artistic-expression/>)

In your **Creative and Artistic Expression** course, you'll engage in hands-on artistic practice. Whether through visual art, music, theater, dance, or creative writing, you'll develop your creative voice, build confidence, and deepen your appreciation for the arts. See available courses. (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/creative-and-artistic-expression/>)

Interdisciplinary Thinking (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/interdisciplinary-thinking/>)

Real-world issues don't fit into a single subject. Your **Interdisciplinary Thinking** course helps you make connections across subjects, analyze issues more deeply, and question assumptions that arise when you only think from one perspective. See available courses. (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/interdisciplinary-thinking/>)

First Year Seminar

(one course; also fulfills one of the general education courses listed above)

The First Year Seminar (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/first-year-seminar/>) (FYS) uses high-impact education practices, with an emphasis on teaching dialogue across differences, to engage with an enduring question or contemporary challenge, approached from the field of the faculty member teaching the course. Students will meet the following learning outcomes:

- A Saint Mary's student engages in open and respectful dialogue across difference as an approach to solving contemporary problems/enduring questions.
- A Saint Mary's student articulates what it means to feel welcome and unwelcome in a group, and the role that belonging has in solving contemporary challenges/enduring questions.

See available First Year Seminar courses (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/first-year-seminar/>)

Writing Proficiency

(one course; also fulfills one of the general education courses listed above)
What is the Writing Proficiency requirement?

As a Saint Mary's student, you'll work toward proficiency in writing throughout your college career. Your Basic W Course is designed to help you prepare for four years of learning as well as a life of writing beyond Saint Mary's. Your writing efforts will be more focused, however, at two stages of your career: shortly after your arrival on campus and as you fulfill your major requirements for graduation. See available courses. (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/academic-guide-first-year-students/the-avenue-experience/writing-proficiency/>)

Basic Writing

Which Basic W course should I choose?

A number of courses throughout the College, known as W courses, are designed to help you strengthen your writing. As you'll see below, these courses represent various disciplines. Each course introduces you to the subject matter of a particular field (philosophy or intercultural studies, for instance; tandem courses explore the connections between two fields, such as history and literature) as well as to the craft of writing.

Many students find it helpful to take a W course in a field that engages them. They discover they enjoy writing and make more progress when the course topic is one they especially want to explore. All W courses fulfill a general education requirement and provide the opportunity to earn the Basic W. Students should feel no pressure to fulfill the basic W with their first course. In fact, many students choose to take extra W courses, even when not required to do so.
