

# GENERAL EDUCATION AT SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE

## General Education Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes for the General Education Program were derived by the Saint Mary's College faculty, focusing on key knowledge and/or skills gained, as aligned with the college's mission and identity as a Catholic, women's, liberal arts institution. They recognize the importance of academic disciplines to liberal arts education while also supporting interdisciplinary learning and the development of skills whose applications cross disciplinary boundaries. Additional outcomes areas support of the Avenue Experience competencies. It's the learning outcomes that turn a collection of courses into a *program*.

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). The General Education learning outcomes are as follows:

### Religious Studies, Theology, and Philosophy

#### Religious Traditions I (one course)

- A Saint Mary's student uses scholarly approaches to gain an informed understanding of diverse religious traditions.

#### Religious Traditions II (one course)

- A Saint Mary's student uses scholarly approaches to accurately analyze central aspects of the diverse Catholic Christian tradition.

#### Philosophy (one course)

- A Saint Mary's student cultivates the philosophical skills and dispositions necessary for exploring life's biggest questions, guided by some of history's most important thinkers.

### Literary and Historical Inquiry

#### Literary Inquiry (one course)

- A Saint Mary's student demonstrates an understanding of plot, structure, and conventions of genre in literary works.

#### Historical Inquiry (one course)

- A Saint Mary's student uses historical methods and primary sources/records to explain historical change within a chronological period, a geographical region, or in relation to a significant topic in human culture.

### Languages and Cultures

#### Modern Languages

(two courses at a level appropriate to the student's previous experience with that language)

- A Saint Mary's student demonstrates novice high or intermediate low proficiency in an approved world language in accordance with

the benchmarks of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL).

- A Saint Mary's student identifies salient features of the geography, history, and culture of those that speak this language, and analyzes within these contexts cultural products, practices, and perspectives.

### Data, Analysis, and Problem Solving

#### Mathematics

(one course)

#### Natural Science

(one course)

#### Social Science

(one course)

- A Saint Mary's student demonstrates the ability to make judgments and draw appropriate conclusions based on analysis of empirical information, while recognizing the limits of this analysis.

### Creative and Artistic Expression

(three credits; single courses satisfying this requirement must be three credits. Multiple courses that fulfill the appropriate learning outcomes may be used to satisfy this requirement as long as they add up to at least three credits and come from the same discipline.)

- A Saint Mary's student demonstrates through artistic practice an understanding of the relevant elements, techniques, and theories that inform the discipline.

### Interdisciplinary Thinking

(one course)

- A Saint Mary's student articulates the value of employing multiple disciplinary approaches, frameworks and/or perspectives to reveal aspects of a particular subject area, enduring question, or contemporary challenge that a singular approach might overlook or obscure.

### First Year Seminar

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

The 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.

### Writing Proficiency

(one course)

#### 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.

**Basic Writing:** This writing requirement, which can be satisfied through many General Education courses, is meant to provide a foundation for your written work at Saint Mary's. In order to fulfill the Basic W, you'll need to be able to advance a logical thesis, organize your thoughts clearly, and develop your ideas effectively. You'll also need to follow standard rules of grammar, syntax, punctuation, and documentation.

**Advanced W:** This requirement is supervised by and satisfied within your major course of study, usually during your junior and senior years. It is meant to help you refine your skills as a writer, particularly by learning to write well within a particular discipline. The Advanced W is not administered by the Writing Proficiency Program; it is fulfilled as part of the student's major course of study.

## Engagement With Avenue Experience College-Wide Competencies

Learning associated with Avenue Experience competencies occurs throughout the general education curriculum, just as it does in majors, minors, and co-curricular opportunities. Because this learning is so broadly distributed across students' experiences, Saint Mary's uses a mapping approach to identify places and spaces where we can organically assess student achievement of those competencies. In particular, four categories of courses in the General Education Curriculum have explicit learning outcomes supporting students *to promote justice and human dignity, with special attention to the experiences of women and marginalized communities*, as aligned with our identity as a Catholic, women's institution.

### Literary Inquiry

- A Saint Mary's student analyzes literary texts using critical and theoretical frameworks, including intersectional feminist perspectives, to understand how literature influences and is influenced by practices of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

### Historical Inquiry

- A Saint Mary's student uses historical methods and primary sources to explain how cultural, political, and economic structures may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or enable privilege and power for individuals or groups.

### Modern Languages

- A Saint Mary's student identifies issues related to diversity, identity, and exclusion across the global contexts of a target language and its associated cultures with attention to the power dynamics that have shaped those contexts.

### Social Science

- A Saint Mary's student uses social science concepts and theories to understand human behavior, systems, and institutions and recognize the connections between them given structural inequalities, exclusion, and/or violence, particularly for historically marginalized groups.