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UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

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Curriculum Design

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN WESTERN CIVILISATION

SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

FACULTY OF LAW, HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS

FEBRUARY 2019

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Wollongong, UOW, is the first university in Australia to partner with the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation. In 2020, it will offer a Bachelor of Arts in Western Civilisation (BA WCiv), along with a suite of associated double degrees and an honours degree.

UOW's BA WCiv is original and distinctive. It is a bold, innovative initiative in Australian higher education. It offers a classical liberal arts degree of the kind traditionally only offered by small colleges in the United States, but one adapted to answer to the needs of a contemporary Australian university degree.

The BA WCiv will implement positive changes of just the sort that a 2019 [opinion piece](#) in The Chronicle of Higher Education calls for by combining “some forms of visionary traditionalism and organizational radicalism. We will need people with the capacity to retrieve and revitalize the best of higher education’s past and restructure it organizationally in ways that are most effective in the future.” (Christian Smith, Jan 9 2019).

A central ambition of this degree is to engage students with “the ideas and arguments of some of the major [thinkers and artists in history], encountered in their own [works] and writings” (Subject Benchmark Statement, 2015). In this vein, it will engage students “with past thought as living argument and as a challenge to contemporary modes of thinking” (Subject Benchmark Statement, 2007). Its subjects will foster “a continuing dialogue with one’s contemporaries, living and dead” (Sellars 1974, p. vii).

Philosophical reflection and analysis are at its very heart. This BA WCiv takes its inspiration from an animating idea of the American philosopher, Robert Hutchins. It seeks to update his notion of the great conversation. In such a conversation, as Hutchins wrote in 1952, “Nothing is to remain undiscussed. Everybody is to speak [their] mind. No proposition is to be left unexamined.”

The UOW version of the BA WCiv will take students on a chronologically ordered, philosophical adventure through the major periods and epochs of intellectual and artistic change in the West. At each stage of their journey, students will engage –firsthand– with exemplary masterpieces of Western thought, art and architecture, and enter into dialogue with the some of the greatest exemplars of non-Western traditions. Along the way, they will cultivate open, critical minds, becoming confident participants in the great conversation – one that will bring them to question what they may not have questioned before.

UOW's BA WCiv aims to be a balanced and forward-looking, new-style liberal arts program – one that is fit for the needs of a multi-cultural 21st century. It will complement the existing Arts and Humanities provision at UOW, adding a further dimension to those offerings by creating new opportunities for students to engage, in depth and detail, with exemplary classics of Western thought, art and architecture. The great works to be examined in the BA WCiv include not only those from the literary and philosophical cannon – but also, for example, religious and scientific texts.

UOW's BA WCiv will create a novel spread of offerings that will add an extra dimension to our existing academic teaching and research strengths, complementing existing offerings while providing something additional and different. By focusing on a systematically sequenced and carefully curated study of Western masterpieces, this degree is unlike any other program of study currently offered at UOW. The philosophical focus it takes to the study of great works distinguishes this degree from those concerned with the politics or history of Western civilisation.

The BA WCiv is a novel academic product in a UOW context – one which will expand our university's educational opportunities without duplicating or competing with existing offerings. The Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts offers an ample array of subjects which critically examine the West's imperial and colonial legacy, and which focus on issues of race, gender, and class from feminist and non-Western perspectives. Students reading for the BA in Western Civilisation can choose, should they wish, to deepen their knowledge of these topics, approaches and perspectives



through their major study and/or double degree, while providing background acquaintance with the history of ideas without which “it is impossible to criticize the devastating effects that Western thought has had” (Wolff 2017).

Thematic subjects in the core curriculum will be devoted to critically examining topics in ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of religion and political philosophy. Students will confront questions, for example, about the nature of selfhood, truth and reason. Students will be equipped to engage with foundational epistemological and metaphysical debates rooted in the history of ideas – such as those between rationalists and empiricists, idealists and realists – that still rage on today.

A major ambition of this course of study is to instil a spirit of open questioning in all of our students and to enable them to reason about and evaluate possible answers to some of the most difficult and abiding questions. In each of their subjects, they will learn how to think, not what to think.

UOW’s BA WCiv degree will suit curious and inquiring minds. It will create articulate graduates who are critical, creative thinkers that embrace and respect open inquiry. Our students will become well-rounded, free thinkers with enriched life and work prospects. They will be erudite and articulate; creative and critical. They will have cultivated the intellectual skills and social virtues needed for conducting reasoned discussion, analysis and argument. They will appreciate and value virtuous, civil and productive conversation, gaining social virtues that are necessary for all capable future leaders and good citizens.

Studying for the BA WCiv at the UOW offers a rare chance to enjoy the best of two worlds: a distinct small liberal arts college experience with all the benefits of a contemporary Australian university degree. Classes will be kept small, with only six to eight students and, normally, students will be engaging with no more than six or so texts in each subject, adopting a Socratic mode of teaching in order to enable them to make their own, deep investigations. Each cohort of 30 or so students will form a collective, cohesive, and collegial community of inquiry. Yet our students will also have access to world-class researchers. Their core academic work will be enhanced by a program of invited talks by distinguished scholars and a visit abroad. Successful applicants will also enjoy extremely generous Ramsay scholarships of \$27,000 a year, for up to 5 years of study.

BENEFITS

The BA in Western Civilisation will benefit the University of Wollongong and Faculty of Law, Arts and the Humanities by:

1. Improving UOW’s national and international reputation by providing a high-quality ‘Great Works’ learning experience that will be unique in Australia;
2. Attracting some of the brightest and highest performing students to UOW, recruiting from a pool across NSW and Australia by offering upwards of 150 generous scholarships of a value rarely available for non-STEM degrees;
3. Providing students in the degree with a rare opportunity to engage deeply with exemplary intellectual and artistic works by exploring them in intensive, small class settings;
4. Complementing UOW’s already highly-regarded arts and humanities offerings, thus adding an extra, educational dimension to the University’s existing educational profile;
5. Increasing student enrolments within select existing majors offered on the main Wollongong Campus and improving prospects for student retention;
6. Enhancing and expanding LHA’s teaching and research strengths through the appointment of 9 new staff through a global search for the best academic talent.



DEGREE STRUCTURES AND OPTIONS

The BA in Western Civilisation will:

1. Promote knowledge and understanding of exemplary masterpieces of Western thought, art and architecture;
2. Develop capacities for philosophical reflection upon and aesthetic appreciation of exemplary masterpieces of Western thought, art and architecture;
3. Critically examine the very idea of Western civilisation and the contribution that Western ideas and ideals make to, and the challenges they raise for, the contemporary world;
4. Promote dialogue and critical discussion between Western and non-Western traditions of thought, art and architecture;
5. Inculcate the intellectual virtues and social skills in students needed for civic participation in rational discussion and argument;
6. Provide an encouraging, effective and open-minded learning environment for all of its students.

The BA in Western Civilisation Honours will:

1. Enhance students' capacities to critically engage with pressing questions relating to the study of Western thought, art and architecture through advanced research;
2. Deepen student's knowledge and critical understanding of their chosen topics of research;
3. Provide training in advanced research methods of the students' chosen discipline/s;
4. Equip students with the advanced research and critical thinking skills needed for producing independent research; research proposals; and extended arguments.

The BA WCiv has a core of 16 mandatory subjects.

WCIV101	The Great Conversation
WCIV102	Classics of Ancient Greece
WCIV103	Wisdom, Truth and Reason
WCIV104	Aesthetics: Masterpieces of the Western Art and Architecture
WCIV105	Classics of the Roman Republic and Empire
WCIV106	The Good Life and the Virtues
WCIV201	Classics of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance
WCIV202	Early Modern Philosophy: Rationalism versus Empiricism
WCIV203	Philosophy of Religion: The Bible and Its Legacy
WCIV204	Classics of the Late Renaissance
WCIV205	The Rise of Western Science
WCIV206	Classics of the Enlightenment and the Age of Revolutions



WCIV301	Thought and Reality: From Idealism to Analytic Philosophy
WCIV302	Philosophy of Democracy: Britain, America, Australia
WCIV303	Classics of the Modern Era
WCIV304	The Self in Western Thought and Art

In the single degree, and in most of the proposed double degrees, students will be required to undertake a major study in addition to the 16 core BA WCiv subjects. BA WCiv Majors include:

- Archaeology and Ancient History
- Creative Writing
- Languages (Excluding Italian)
- History
- Indigenous Studies
- Sociology
- English Literatures
- Philosophy
- Politics
- International Relations
- Global Sustainable Development

Students will have some elective options within their chosen majors. Most disciplines allow students to choose approximately 50% of the subjects that comprise their Major study. Students will be required to choose their Major at the start of their studies.

The elected major study (or associated degree in a double degree) will provide students with additional education and training in their chosen discipline. This will add significant value to the knowledge, social skills and virtues acquired through the core subjects, and to the overall value of this liberal arts degree.

Students electing to study on a double degree pattern will benefit from a combination of learning outcomes which complement and enhance those of each single degree. Double degree options include:

- Bachelor of Creative Arts
- Bachelor of International Studies
- Bachelor of Law
- Bachelor of Politics, Philosophy and Economics



TRANSFORMATIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE AT UOW

Two foundational 100-level subjects – *The Great Conversation* and *Aesthetics* – will provide students with an overview of their whole degree and a basic training in the key disciplinary skills and concepts needed for pursuing their detailed studies. The first of these subjects will introduce students to an updated version of Hutchins (1952) idea of the great conversation – a conversation in which they will become active and consummate participants over the course of their liberal arts education.

The BA WCiv’s cornerstone subjects will teach students how to approach great literary, philosophical and artistic masterpieces. They will have firsthand practical training in how to closely and critically examine exemplary texts and artworks and, also, how to think about the philosophical issues raised by such works.

In their first year, students will also be taught how they should conduct themselves in open-minded, well-reasoned, and civil conversation with others in their efforts to rationally evaluate the questions and possibilities raised by the great works that they will critically examine together. As Martha Nussbaum observes in *Not for Profit*, democracy needs citizens “who can think for themselves, criticize tradition, and understand the significance of another person’s sufferings and achievements” (p. 2).

In a commencement speech to Colgate University in 2010, she stressed that this should not to be understood as a capacity to be used in private by isolated individuals. Explicating key themes from her 1998 classic *Cultivating Humanity*, she reminds us that what we need, most of all, are citizens “who can reason together about their choices rather than just trading claims and counter-claims.” Fundamentally, a liberal arts education aims to create students who are able “to speak in their own voices and to respect the voices of others.” (Nusbaum 1994).

The BA WCiv will cultivate these social virtues, but crucially – in addition – it will hone students’ skilled use of their narrative imaginations, enabling them to become intelligent, sensitive readers not only of great works but also of the stories of others. As Nussbaum (2017) rightly emphasizes, “Citizens cannot relate well to the complex world around them by factual knowledge and logic alone. The third ability of the citizen, closely related to the first two, is what we can call the narrative imagination” (p. 95). Students will take intelligent and skilful risks in this process, guided by their teachers. They will be equipped with the skills for viewing the world through differing ‘lenses’ and perspectives.

Students will exercise and be tested on the basic skills they acquire in the two foundational 100-level subjects and in the four other subjects that comprise the core of their first-year experience. Assessment tasks in all of these initial subjects will be sequenced and scaffolded to allow students to learn and receive feedback in small, low-stakes tasks as they begin their studies. These assessments will occur early on, in the first four weeks, by asking students to produce short critical reviews and complete on-line quizzes and exercises.

The first-year experience focuses not only on the content of what is taught but, crucially, how that content is taught. For example, thought experiments will be used to engage students with material in the set readings. Surveys from our largest 1st year Philosophy introductory subject at UOW consistently reveal that thought experiments are extremely popular with students (e.g. the most recent on-line survey revealed that 97% favoured them; 34% reported that they were ‘the best thing about the subject’).

Students will be introduced to the wider relevance of a liberal arts education. They will learn how their intellectual training can be valuable in many lines of work. They will engage in an Employability Skills Exercise, which will involve being quizzed on their initial knowledge of employability advantages conferred by the capacities, skills and virtues that they will acquire from studying the BA WCiv degree. They will be required to investigate and evaluate evidence about



which aspects of their skill-set are most valued by non-academic employers. Completing this reflective exercise alone, will help to make students more employable.

Students will be supported in their investigations by a wealth of information about how a liberal education improves the prospects for employability on the Liberal Arts Central Moodle site. The site provides evidence of how a liberal arts education is valuable in just about any line of work; how it develops persuasive powers; critical and creative thinking, problem solving abilities, and soft communication skills.

Taken as a whole, the core of the BA WCiv is structured to equip students with foundational skills and key concepts at each stage of study so as to develop and then assure the Course Learning Outcomes progressively. At 100-level, students will receive basic training in how to begin to read and analyse great works as well as how to begin to produce reasoned arguments and critical evaluations of issues raised by those works. They will be given initial training on how to prepare essays and provided with formative feedback on those early efforts through the review of their essay plans. These competences and skills will be further developed and honed by setting more advanced and challenging tasks in 200- and 300-level subjects. For example, students taking final-year subjects will be expected to be able to provide deeper analyses and subtler interpretations of the material with which they deal. Some 300-level assignments will require students to meta-reflect on their previous analyses of their own work: this will be taken into account in subject learning outcomes.

In addition to their core studies in the BA WCiv, students will acquire other foundational, disciplinary skills through their chosen majors and, for those who elect to take up the option, through their additional double degree studies.

The small class sizes in the core subjects of the BA WCiv and supporting extra-curricular activities will ensure that students enjoy a robust common experience, not only in their first-year but throughout their degree. Our approach concurs with Zakaria's (2016) observation that "there are also social benefits to a common core. All students are able to share an intellectual experience. They can discuss it together, join in its delights, and commiserate over its weaknesses."

Extra-curricular events will bring students into regular contact with staff, HDR students and external academics. These events will be educationally-focused with a social dimension – a program of invited talks, an annual retreat (with philosophical games, student-led presentations, external speakers) and international visits. The former will be built around visits from world-class academics and distinguished speakers from Australia and the rest of the world. External assessors consistently recognize the value of these initiatives – e.g. the 2017 HSI School Review report commended the "strong sense of identity, community and collegiality amongst Philosophy students [fostered] through social events and regular discussion 'cafes'."

Students at all levels will benefit from one-to-one progress interviews, run by academic staff. These annual meetings create an opportunity for students to reflect on their previous feedback – identifying their strengths and allowing them to address weaknesses. To facilitate these interviews, staff will provide summative and future-oriented feedback on specially designed essay appraisal forms.

To ensure students are further supported in learning and assessment, the academic team will organise a bespoke induction process and produce a comprehensive course guide and a detailed set of subject guides.

The degree team will employ a range of traditional methods for providing academic guidance, including regular consultation hours. The Ramsay Centre agreement also includes funding to hire a dedicated Student Success Officer who will provide dedicated, one-on-one support throughout the program.

MY PORTFOLIO AT UOW

Students will be required to produce three authentic, digital artefacts with accompanying reflections – one in each year of their study. The digital artefacts they will be asked to produce may take the form of: uploaded written material; audio



podcasts; voice annotated/animated PowerPoint slideshows; videos and so on. Students will be given advice and training on how to produce these objects. An e-repository will be created within the Liberal Arts Central Moodle site, where – with the students’ permission – exemplary digital artefacts will be showcased. Students will be encouraged to keep their own set of artefacts: the benefits of this practice will be highlighted to students on an annual basis in their Progress Interview meetings.

A major assignment for students in their first, foundational subject – *The Great Conversation* – will be to critically examine the very idea of Western civilisation and the contribution that Western ideas and ideals make to the contemporary world. They will be asked to ponder not only the notion of Western civilisation, but the notion of civilisation itself and its many varied and changing meanings. For example, students will be invited to consider work by Professor Kwame Anthony Appiah, Professor of Philosophy and Law NYU/Emeritus Professor Princeton University, who examined the very idea of Western civilisation in his [2016 Reith Lectures, Mistaken Identities](#). Students will be assessed on the quality of their evaluations of reasons for thinking, whether for or against, that “There is no such thing as western civilisation”.

Drawing on newspaper pieces and other media, students will produce a digital artefact in which they reflect on the public debate over the creation of their degree – focusing on concerns raised about its private funding and those raised by the Great Books debate more generally. In this way the degree itself will become an object of study concerning the power of ideas and the character and quality of public argument and decision-making.

In their 200-level subject – *The Rise of Western Science* – students will build on what they learned in examining theories of truth, evidence and argument in the 100-level subject – *Wisdom, Truth and Reason*. They will be required to reflect on what they learned in that subject, and to apply their knowledge to questions about the importance of truth, evidence and argument in scientific theorizing. They will produce a critical analysis and reflection on how well theories in contemporary philosophy of science manage to account for the changes in thinking and practice that led to the birth of science in the West.

In their final year, students will return to another key topic introduced in the 100-level subject *Wisdom, Truth and Reason*: the Delphic injunction to ‘Know thyself’. On first acquaintance, this injunction reveals to students that through their study they will be embarking on an adventure of self-understanding. A major aim of the degree is to ignite a personal desire in each student to know themselves, and the ideals and values to which they adhere. Students will return to this when they consider the Delphic injunction afresh at the end of their undergraduate journey in their final 300-level subject – *The Self in Western Thought and Art*. This subject, which brings their studies full circle, raises questions about the nature and existence of the self. But, it will also require students to think about on how great ideas and great art shapes us and our self-understanding, informing who we are and our capacity to make sense of who we are. As a final assignment, they will be asked to look back on their own educational journey throughout their degree and to create an autobiographical reflection on how their engagement with exemplary masterpieces changed them. In producing this digital artefact, they will be permitted to use their preferred medium – e.g. poetry, prose, recorded oral narration, video or other pictorial formats with narrative elements.

HYBRID LEARNING AT UOW

Hybrid learning will be incorporated into the core of the degree in a number of ways.



A Liberal Arts central Moodle site will be created which will serve as a one-stop shop, providing a wealth of on-line resources and activities, while also providing a means to communicate with all students studying the BA WCiv course.

In their foundational subject, *The Great Conversation*, students will be supported with specially designed on-line essay preparation exercises in order to train them in how to write their first essays at university. Students also will benefit from specially designed on-line quizzes – e.g. concerning logical argumentation and career possibilities – hosted on their subject Moodle sites.

Live lectures in each of their subjects will be supported by on-line lecture précis that will make use of special curated text, audio and video material to provide necessary background for each lecture. The précis can be viewed in advance of a lecture in order to help students prepare and focus their learning each week.

With respect to hybrid learning proper, real-time quizzes and live polls will be held within lectures, making best use of the Echo360 Active Learning Platform. Live polls in lectures have a number of benefits. They enable on-the-fly questioning and ways to visualize real-time student responses so that they become objects for joint class attention and reflection. Live polls are thus valuable tools for quick formative feedback.

Students will also be given advice and training on how to produce digital objects that they create in their course (see My Portfolio at UOW for details).

CONNECTIONS AT UOW

The new BA WCiv focuses centrally on the study of great works of Western civilisation. As such, all of its core subjects will acquaint students with international perspectives. Through those core subjects, students will be brought into contact with European and Anglo-American perspectives from a variety of places and times across the globe and history.

In addition, right from the beginning of their study, students will also be introduced to non-Western and under-represented voices and perspectives. This will be a central theme in the foundational first year subject: *The Great Conversation*. To take one example, students will be exposed to alternative readings of Western classics, such as Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018), which is lauded as an outstanding feminist re-telling of *The Iliad*.

To take another example, students will be asked to consider: to what extent the ancient Greeks would have, and could have, operated with our modern racial concepts and categories? Further, they will be asked to ponder how we might answer that sort of question through careful scrutiny of Homer's epic poems. These kinds of readings and questions will serve as motivating opportunities for students to examine contemporary thinking on the philosophy of gender, race and class, as informed by the latest research. Through paths such as these, a variety of diverse voices reflecting alternative standpoints within and to Western traditions of thought and religion will be brought into the conversation (see Mackenzie and Townley, 2013).

The Great Conversation will also teach students about great achievements of non-Western civilisations, cultures and traditions (Mack 1994). They will look at examples of how the ideas, ideals, artworks and practices of non-Western cultures and civilisations influenced and overlapped with those of their Western counterparts. To take a paradigmatic case, students will reflect on what the West owes to scholars of the golden age of Islam, such as Ibn al-Haytham, who is credited with being the first to define the modern scientific method.

There is a clear rationale for making such connections explicit. As Zakaria (2016) observes, while reference to multiculturalism in education is “usually a cliché that indicates little of substance, or only involves Western critiques of the West”, a genuine multicultural education is one that provides appropriate points of comparison so that “one can understand the distinctive qualities of Western or Chinese or Indian culture” (see also Van Norden 2017).



The BA WCiv's predominant focus is on studying exemplary masterpieces of the West. Students will be critically engaging with the best of the West. Yet, as Hutchins observed back in 1952, a program of liberal arts that makes pivotal achievements of Western civilisation as its focus need not, and should not be, motivated by a desire to demonstrate that the West is best. Rather it is motivated by a desire to better appreciate and understand Western contributions to thought, art and architecture.

Accordingly, students will be required to make reasoned comparisons between the ideas and ideals of different cultures and civilisations. Indigenous philosophy and art, for example, has much to offer to the great conversation that needs to be had today. When it comes to thinking about environmental philosophy non-Western traditions of thought and practice are “often held up as models for how to live in harmony with the more-than-human world” (Kelbessa 2011, p. 575). Some go further – like Lynn White Jr. in a [much-cited article in *Science*](#) – claiming that “the devaluation of nature and pervasive anthropocentrism characteristic of Western philosophical and religious traditions ... constituted the root cause of environmental crises” (ibid, p. 575). Students will be required to confront, investigate and evaluate claims of this kind, based on evidence and argument.

The Great Conversation will not only set the stage for, and equip students to, make such reasoned assessments, it will set the tone for how discussion of these topics should be conducted throughout the course of their studies. Students will learn how to communicate professionally and ethically amongst themselves and with others from outside their degree. They will be taught how to properly acknowledge and respect diverse voices for what they have to contribute. Following Martha Nussbaum's advice in [Liberal Education and Global Community](#), the BA WCiv will create a “classroom that teaches the virtues of critical analysis and respectful debate”. It will create students who value civil, deliberative and democratic discussion and can serve as an antidote to the kind of polarization that causes the notion of the “conflict of civilisations” to spring too “easily to people's minds and lips”.

Students will be introduced to Indigenous perspectives in their first-year foundational subject in a way that respects and epitomises Indigenous traditions. In line with the aim to cultivate students' narrative imaginations, this will be achieved by participating in yarning circles and listening to oral narratives and stories with local visitors – students will participate in and come to appreciate these unique narrative practices that connect to place and country. Students will be introduced to research that examines how Australian Indigenous narrative practices compare with those in Western cultures and how we might learn lessons from such practices in our on-going attempts to promote resilience and well-being (Klapproth, 1962; Wingard et al. 2015; Hutto 2008, Hutto and Gallagher 2017).

The Great Conversation is premised on the idea that a liberal arts education “can cultivate sympathy in many ways, through engagement with many different works of literature, music, fine art, and dance” (Nussbaum 2017, p. 106). It will embed exercises through which students will adopt and enact unfamiliar perspectives via role-play. This will be achieved through organized role-playing games and by getting students to enact rituals from cultures other than their own. Having students adopt and embody alternative perspectives, through such participatory activities, will cultivate their authentic appreciation of the situations of others. Through these exercises students will be brought to a deeper, and not merely distanced and third-personal, appreciation of “issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and cross-cultural experience and understanding” (Nussbaum 2017, p. 108).

Through our invited speaker program, students will have other opportunities to practice and hone their communicative skills with external audiences through their exchanges with distinguished visiting scholars.

In their other first-year foundational subject – *Aesthetics: Masterpieces of Western Art and Architecture* – students will expand their imaginative horizons in other ways. They will not only engage with canonical examples of great Western art, they will also bring those works into conversation with great works of non-Western traditions (Mack 1994). This is crucially important “since works of art are frequently an invaluable way of beginning to understand the achievements and sufferings of a culture different from one's own” (Nussbaum 2017, p. 108).



The BA WCiv degree will take direction from other well-regarded, successful liberal arts degrees. In particular, it looks to import a key design principle from the Yale-NUS curriculum through which, “Students study not only Plato and Aristotle but also, in the same course, Confucius and the Buddha—and ask why their systems of ethics might be similar or different. They study the Odyssey and the Ramayana. They examine the ‘primitivisms’ of Paul Gauguin and Pablo Picasso while also looking at the woodcarvings from the South Sea Islands and the ukiyo-e tradition of Japanese woodblock prints that influenced Western artists.”

The making of these connections must be done sensitively, striking the right balance and avoiding two standard mistakes. In a *Yale News* piece, Bryan Garston identifies the two mistakes as follows: “One is to orientalize the other traditions — to make them seem so exotic that we can never create conversations between them, and that’s a mistake ... The other is to assimilate them too quickly, and to think that we can easily bring these traditions together under the headings that we would be familiar with from our tradition.”

Apart from these foundational subjects, diverse voices will also be brought into the great conversation through other first-year and specific upper level subjects in the core program – such as WCIV103; WCIV106; WCIV203, WCIV205; WCIV301 and WCIV304. These subjects will compare, for example: the ethical philosophies of Aristotle and Confucius; non-classical approaches to logic and philosophies of the self that are offered by Western thinkers with the treatment of the same topics in Buddhism; the role of reason, faith and revelation in Christianity and Islam.

In advancing a multi-cultural manifesto, Bryan Van Norden claims that “most philosophy departments stubbornly insist that only Western philosophy is real philosophy and denigrate everything outside the European canon” (Van Norden 2017). Whether or not this charge is true of other degree programs, the BA WCiv will work to actively combat such unphilosophical tendencies.

The BA WCiv degree will, as its name suggests, predominately focus on the great books of the Western tradition. This is entirely appropriate in light of Garfield and Van Norden’s (2016) insistence that “any department that regularly offers courses only on Western Philosophy should rename itself ‘Department of European and American Philosophy’”. Despite its focus on Western thought and art, the BA WCiv initiates well-placed, high-quality conversations with non-Western traditions of thought and art throughout. These occur in half of – 8 of 16 – its core subjects. It thereby will open up more positive, revealing and respectful conversations with non-Western traditions of thought and art than do programs which only examine those traditions in a few elective subjects.

The BA WCiv is inherently cross-disciplinary: it combines elements of the study of classics, literature and philosophy. Students will be required to take up a major in a further discipline and/or may elect to do a double degree. Interested students can opt to deepen their understanding of alternative, non-Western and cross-disciplinary perspectives by combining their BA WCiv core study with a major that focuses more centrally on investigating and learning about those perspectives.



CAPSTONE AT UOW

The 300-level subject – Philosophy of Democracy – is the capstone subject for the BA WCiv. This is appropriate for several reasons.

First, in embracing democracy, as a nation, Australia embraces an important set of Western ideas and ideals. Becoming an Australian citizen requires taking an oath in which individuals publicly commit to upholding democratic beliefs and to respecting the attendant rights and liberties that being part of a democratic nation affords to all. Subscribing to such democratic beliefs and values forms a fundamental part of what the Australian government calls ‘our common bond’. Australian democracy is not merely Western, it has decidedly Anglo-American roots. For even though democratic ideas and ideals can be ultimately traced back to ancient Greece, it is the political philosophies that emerged in Britain and America that most directly shape Australia’s distinctive form of democracy.

Secondly, reflecting on democratic ideas and ideals in their capstone subject affords students a significant opportunity to engage in some real-world problem solving. They will be asked to ponder: whether we should, and how we could, embed democratic ideals in all forms of decision-making? What role, if any, can and should democratic and egalitarian ideals play in the decision-making of local economies, corporations, businesses and institutions of higher education? What are the costs and benefits of adopting democratic approaches in practice in these contexts? What are the obstacles and limitations of doing so?

For example, students will be asked to reflect on the ambiguities and tensions which arise from attempts to decolonize university curricula. As noted in [Decolonizing Philosophy](#), “the very structure of the arguments in favour of the decolonization of the university is ambiguous, since university courses, scientific articles, PhD programs and symposiums were all born in the Western world and bear the marks of their origin.” Moreover, “the struggles to conquer universities take place in a democratic context that regulates them, and which they feed in turn. At the same time, experimenting with what a democracy can facilitate and tolerate means taking the risk of being at odds with the spirit of democracy.”

In preparing for their answers to these imposing but important questions, students will be required to refer to their set readings and take part in a group reasoning exercise. They will be asked to sit on one or other side of a room based on whether their initial answer to the following question is ‘yes’ or ‘no’: Is democracy defunct in today’s world? Students on both sides of the issue will then be asked to state their reasons for their initial answer. If, on hearing others’ reasons someone is moved to change their mind that person will be required to move physically to the opposite side of the room. They will then be required to explain their reasons for changing their mind to the entire audience. Further discussion will ensue, under the same rules for a specified time. The group reasoning event will be recorded and shared as a vidcast for everyone involved to review.

Drawing on their degree-long training in analysis and deliberation, students will then be required to write a reflective report, based both on their set readings; independent research; and what they learned from the Group Reasoning exercise of hearing one another’s reasons for adopting particular stances on the central question.

A roundtable event will then be hosted in which students will present their findings for scrutiny and discussion by policy researchers and practitioners, local business leaders, higher education executives and entrepreneurs.



RESEARCH-BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING

The School of Liberal Arts (SOLA), will recruit staff with expertise in the periods and topics to be taught but who are also capable of taking a research-based, inquiry-led philosophical stance on the degree's subject matter and related contemporary issues.

World-class academic researchers will be sought when making these appointments. Academic talent with a background in, and strong capacity for, philosophical research will be a common denominator of the hires in the School, ensuring the team's cohesion.

In January 2019, Senior Professor Hutto was appointed as Head of SOLA and Professor Shaun Gallagher was appointed as its first Professorial Fellow. Nine further academic appointments will be made in the coming years with an eye to ensuring that the curriculum is informed by appropriate scholarship and research-driven expertise. All staff will be expected to be actively engaged in research which, along with related activities, will underpin both the curriculum and the teaching environment.

The inaugural Head of SOLA has a longstanding commitment to, and experience in, ensuring productive synergies exists between teaching and research. This was noted of the first program that he led in the UK: "The Hertfordshire experience illustrates clearly that a good ... department needs, and benefits enormously from, the day-to-day presence within the department of experienced researchers dedicated to and actively involved in face-to-face teaching at the undergraduate level" (External Examiner Report 2003). Similarly, the 2017 School of Humanities and Social Inquiry Review report commended the Philosophy program he led at the time for its "commitment to research, which is embedded in Philosophy teaching".

ADVISORY BOARD

An independent advisory board has been established for the BA WCiv. It is comprised of academics of high standing and local community experts. So far, the following experts have provided feedback on BA WCiv proposal and, additionally, agreed to serve on the board:

1. Professor Mark Alfano, Australian Catholic University, AU
2. Professor Paul Chandler, Pro Vice-Chancellor Inclusion and Outreach, UOW, AU
3. Professor Rita Charon, Executive Director of the Program in Narrative Medicine, Columbia University, USA
4. Dr. Mark Damien Delp, Dean, Zaytuna College, USA
5. Shaykh Umar Faroqoh, Nawawi Foundation, USA
6. Prof Jay Garfield, Doris Silbert Professor Smiths College; Harvard Divinity School, USA
7. Professor Simon Haines, CEO Ramsay Centre, Sydney AU
8. Professor Mari Hatavara, University of Tampere, Finland, EU
9. Professor Jesús Ilundáin-Agurruza, Linfield College, USA
10. Dr Pano Kanelos, President St. John's College, USA
11. Dr. Anita Leirfall, Associate Professor, University of Bergen, EU
12. Dr. Stephen McInerney, Executive Officer Academic, Ramsay Centre, Sydney, AU
13. Professor David Rosenthal, The Graduate Centre, City University of New York, USA
14. Dr. Anthony Rudd, Associate Professor, St. Olaf College, USA



15. Professor Sonia Sikka, University of Ottawa, CA

16. Dr. Neil Sinhababu, Associate Professor, National University of Singapore, S'pore

Teaching staff will be encouraged to consult advisory board members when designing their individual subjects for advice on readings, appropriate teaching styles and curricular activities. Staff will also be encouraged to review examples of [best practice in the promotion of inclusive learning](#) provided by the Australasian Association of Philosophy. They will be supported should they elect to take part in Jindaola, a new educational development program at UOW which teaches staff how to respectfully and appropriately embed Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in the curriculum.



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