



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA



Origins & Reception

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN WESTERN CIVILISATION

SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

FACULTY OF LAW, HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS

FEBRUARY 2019



ORIGIN OF UOW'S BA IN WESTERN CIVILISATION

In October 2017, the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation approached a select group of universities to gauge their interest in forming a partnership. The Centre sought to evaluate each institution's capacity to create a new kind of BA degree – one inspired by the spirit of 'great book' liberal arts degrees which are popular in the USA but adapted to the demands of today's Australian universities.

UOW was among the initial group of Universities approached, creating an opportunity for UOW to prepare a bid describing in detail how it envisaged designing a unique educational product: a new brand of liberal arts degree. Senior academics from the Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts were consulted about the prospects of and potential for the Faculty to answer the call successfully. In the end, Senior Professor Daniel D. Hutto was chosen to lead the UOW bid and, while honouring confidentiality requirements, he consulted with relevant and suitably qualified academics and stakeholders.

After almost a year of competitive review, the Ramsay Centre board signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 14 December 2018 committing to partner with UOW to create a BA degree based on the latter's proposed curriculum. It agreed to donate upward of A\$50 Million to UOW to fund the creation of a new School of Liberal Arts to house the new BA, with attendant staff appointments and generous student scholarships.

The School of Liberal Arts has now been established and its new BA in Western Civilisation degree was fully approved by the University in January 2019. The final version of the curriculum (see accompanying documents) has received many strong endorsements from academic experts worldwide, a selection of which are included below.



A WORD FROM THE UOW CHANCELLOR

“I am proud that UOW is the first recipient of the Ramsay Centre’s funds to develop the degree in Western Civilisation. Our concept is gaining global endorsements, and it reflects UOW’s adaptability and constructive approach. We are looking forward to having our first students in 2020.”

Jillian Broadbent AC

Chancellor, University of Wollongong



A WORD FROM THE HEAD OF THE SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

The UOW version of the BA in Western Civilisation is a unique educational initiative – it combines features of five different liberal arts, great books programs at Columbia College; St John’s College; St Olaf College; Zaytuna College and Yale-NUS College. Elements of each were blended, in very specific proportions, to create UOW’s unique liberal arts degree. Its four distinctive features are that it:

- Is philosophical, through and through;
- Explores great masterworks of thought and art in small classes;
- Enters into respectful, high-quality conversations with non-Western traditions;
- Speaks to contemporary concerns, issues and questions.

It offers new content to complement our existing programs of study. Its special features require the creation of new subjects that will not be embedded in existing programs. To enable this, a new School of Liberal Arts has been established and appropriately qualified academics are being recruited specifically to teach this degree.

Daniel Hutto

Senior Professor of Philosophical Psychology

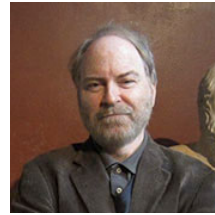
Head of the School of Liberal Arts

University of Wollongong



ENDORSEMENTS OF UOW'S BA IN WESTERN CIVILISATION FROM EXPERT ACADEMIC CONSULTANTS

“The new curriculum looks great. Art, literature, religion, science and especially philosophy, all structured in a framework of intellectual history of different periods. It reminds me of my own undergraduate curriculum. I really like the fact that you have strongly integrated into the curriculum other non-Western traditions to demonstrate both connections and contrasts. I also like the fact that you have students reading the great works of Anne Conway, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Germaine Greer, W. E. B. Du Bois, and so many other voices that don't typically appear in the great books line-up. As well as the masters of suspicion: Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud! It's like a debate curriculum that encourages disputation and allows for rational dissent -- which, in truth, is what the liberal arts tradition is meant to be. I think it's a great mix and will work well.”



Professor Shaun Gallagher, Distinguished Professorial Fellow, School of Liberal Arts, UOW; Lillian and Morrie Moss Chair of Excellence in Philosophy at the University of Memphis, Anneliese Maier Research Award recipient, Humboldt Foundation (2012-2018); Honorary Professor of Health Sciences at the University of Tromsø, Norway.

“With great interest, indeed excitement, I have read the papers you have sent regarding the establishment at UOW of a new Bachelor of Arts in Western Civilisation degree in partnership with the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation. Both the aims of the program and the suggested curriculum are beautifully thought out.

I am truly delighted to know that such a program will exist. Wonderful!!”



Professor Ruth Millikan, Distinguished Professor Emerita, Philosophy Department, University of Connecticut, USA

“What an amazing opportunity! I look on it very positively because I see the breadth of the aims. As I see it this is an opportunity to link Western to other perspectives and to redress exclusions. We are all aware that some of the most demanding and interesting ideas of the aims and possibilities of human life can be given -- and sometimes have been given -- interpretations that make them sound prejudiced and even sectarian. Think of what has happened to understandings of liberalism, or for that matter of conservatism, or of patriotism, or of various religions. In my view the reduction of discussions of justice to discussions of rights, provides another illustration of this issue. This Bachelor of Arts should provide a welcome chance for students to make sustained contact with great works and through that to explore questions that matter for the world.”



Baroness Onora O'Neill, Emeritus Professor Cambridge University; Peer, House of Lords, UK

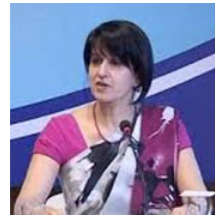


“The mark of an educated mind according to Aristotle is the ability to hold competing ideas simultaneously. The UOW curriculum, which ranges across the discordant, variegated and heterogenous tradition of the West, while putting elements of that tradition in conversation with other traditions, will undoubtedly prepare graduates for our complex, dynamic world.”



Dr Panayiotis Kanelos, President, St. John’s College, USA

“This is an excellent initiative. I am usually skeptical of ‘Great Books’ and ‘Western Civilisation’ programs, worrying that they will reproduce prejudices about ‘West’ and ‘East’ and be hagiographical in their treatment of authors and texts. But this program makes a genuine effort to integrate critical voices in its approach to the canon and to engage in a meaningful fashion with non-Western traditions. It will offer students a comprehensive and rigorous study of central figures and ideas in the history of European culture and its descendants, while challenging the notion that these constitute a singular, insulated body of tradition and drawing attention to influences and insights from elsewhere. That’s exactly what’s needed these days, in my view, as the role of education in the humanities should be to encourage critical, cross-cultural reflection on the matters that affect us as, well, human beings.”



Professor Sonia Sikka, University of Ottawa, Canada

“It is a wonderful curriculum which will provide students with an important perspective on Western thought. This sensitively-chosen course of study will allow students to put familiar concepts into historical context, and develop the skills necessary for critical evaluation of the tradition. It will also help them to appreciate that “Western thought” is not monolithic, but contains, and has always contained, many voices, some of them more frequently heard than others. I especially like the fact that the program embeds a major study, chosen from a variety of disciplines, and double degree options that make it possible to appreciate better the complex relations among different traditions.”



Professor Marya Schechtman, University of Illinois at Chicago, USA



“I would like to congratulate you and your colleagues at the University of Wollongong for the excellent new program in liberal arts and Western Civilisation. A profound understanding of the diversity and depth of civilisation will provide your graduates a competitive edge in today’s world, where culture as values and practices penetrates any societal, technological or economical endeavor. Coming from a small culture, I can appreciate this program providing inclusive insights into Western civilisation, while the philosophical emphasis offers a solid foundation for critical thinking.”



Professor Mari Hatavara, Professor of Literature, Tampere University, Finland, EU

“Looks good; I like the combination of historical courses and more thematic ones.”



Dr Anthony Rudd, St. Olaf College, USA

“The new program will be great for Wollongong. I think you did a good job of explaining how the Western Civilisation program will connect to non-Western components of the curriculum.”



Dr Neil Sinhababu, Associate Professor, National University of Singapore, S’Pore

“The program of study looks excellent. It is well-thought out and really interesting!”



Professor Frances Egan, Rutgers University, USA



“I view this Western-based curriculum as formidable. The vision this proposal endorses —one which proposes without imposing, and further which embraces critically vetted appreciation— is one that I found most exciting and praiseworthy. In other words, the proposed program is a most beneficial and advisable contribution to an all too often insular academic world.

While centered on Western civilisation, it is also duly catholic in how it seeks a true dialogue with other cultures, and how it turns its critical eye on itself first and foremost. One of its strongest methodological virtues is the critical acumen it aims at developing in students. Looking at one’s own roots and understanding those first is *the* preeminent philosophical first step—self-examination. Then one can most profitably engage others and other ideas fruitfully and illuminatingly.

The fortunate students who will be part of this program will receive an extremely robust and curated educational experience that, truly, would be a dream for any student not only in large university campuses but also any liberal arts college.

I commend the University of Wollongong and you for this visionary, ambitious, and brave new program that will meet the needs of 21st century students with the wisdom of the past, which is most relevant than ever as today’s modern technologies challenge our very conception, nay, the very nature itself, of what a human being is.”



Professor Jesús Ilundáin-Agurruza -
Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy
Samuel H. Graf Faculty Achievement Award
2011-2012, Allen and Pat Kelley Faculty Scholar
2008-2009, Linfield College, USA

“This is a very thorough and highly interesting curriculum – one that is relevant for contemporary debates within philosophy, art, and the sciences.

I appreciate the emphasis that it places on dialogue-based, Socratic method-style teaching. That way of teaching works well for students and suits your aim of teaching students how to think, not what to think. In all, it is an excellent curriculum. Congratulations!”



Dr. Anita Leirfall, Associate Professor,
University of Bergen, Norway

“A hugely impressive undertaking. The philosophical content, conception, and execution in the documents is terrific. Monies could not be spent better for pedagogical ends. All in all, it looks wonderful and I wish you all the best with it.”

Professor Scott Sturgeon, University of
Birmingham, UK



“I would like to congratulate you and your colleagues, and the University of Wollongong, for the work you have done in developing a fine example of a liberal arts degree in the Great Books of Western Civilisation. None of us who have worked on comparable projects is ignorant of how difficult it is to justify such a task, especially given the universality and vigor of critical perspectives that have raised serious doubts regarding not only the value but especially the propriety of offering courses in fields that have originated from European institutions.

Your proposal clearly fulfills both the primary requisite of providing the best examples of the Western scholarly tradition and the need to engage the currents of critical theories that seek to hold that tradition accountable for its legacies.

As someone who has assisted the work of Zaytuna College’s twin goals of 1) integrating the traditional Trivium of liberal arts—Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric—of both Western and Islamic intellectual traditions and 2) conducting Hutchins’s “great conversation” at the level of comparative Islamic and Western philosophy, theology, history, law, and aesthetics, I can recognize and conscientiously applaud the seriousness and promise of your own aspirations.”



Dr. Mark Damien Delp, Dean of Faculty,
Zaytuna College, Berkeley, California, USA

“A very impressive, *extremely* ambitious undertaking.”



Professor Mark Alfano, Australian Catholic
University, AU

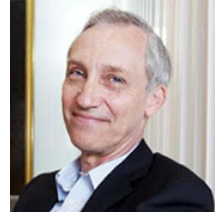
“This is a terrific curriculum that sets a very high standard for a modern great books program. It is well integrated and the proportions are right.”



Dr. Stephen McInerney, Executive Officer
Academic, Ramsay Centre, Sydney, AU



“UOW is one of Australia's most forward-thinking, teaching-oriented, genuinely progressive universities, and this splendid great books program reflects that. This transformative type of integrated program is unfamiliar in Australia and Britain, but widely practiced in smaller North American liberal art colleges. The collaborative exposure to highly complex texts will enable all students to develop a genuinely critical mindset, applicable in all walks of life, irrespective of their future political or social affiliations, while at the same time making them intelligently aware of an extremely rich and broad intellectual and artistic heritage.”



Professor Simon Haines, CEO, Ramsay Centre,
Sydney, AU

