BUILDING ON 125 YEARS FOUNDATIONS BARNARD’S NEW CURRICULUM

MODERN. AMBITIOUS. FLEXIBLE.
Introducing Foundations

Barnard proudly builds on its 125-year history with Foundations, a forward-looking new curriculum. Honoring the College’s commitment to the liberal arts and its strong mission and goals, Foundations is modern, ambitious, and flexible—all to keep pace with our rapidly evolving world.

Foundations, which goes into effect for students entering in Fall 2016, prepares Barnard students for the future by adding depth and breadth to our existing course of study. It emphasizes technology and digital learning; international and global learning; and the importance of quantitative and empirical reasoning. Our students are expected to study the local—our connection with New York City—and the historical, and to study and think hard about social difference. And with Foundations, Barnard is one of the first liberal arts colleges with a distinct technology requirement.

Foundations is uniquely Barnard. It’s a diverse and forward-looking curriculum that asks our students to think theoretically, empirically, and technologically, to write effectively, and to speak persuasively—all while giving them the freedom to shape their own educational experience.

—Linda A. Bell, Provost

How will it work?

Foundations provides students with a diverse and ambitious curriculum that is uniquely Barnard. Woven through it all, the new set of General Education Requirements—First-Year Experience, Distributional Requirements, Modes of Thinking, Senior Experience—is robust and adaptable to individual needs and interests.

First-Year Experience

Barnard students discover the benefits of Foundations from the start. The First-Year Experience includes two seminars of seminar classes: First-Year Writing, focusing on reading literature, texts critically and writing effectively, and First-Year Seminar, emphasizing disciplinary and interdisciplinary content that challenges students to write and speak persuasively. First-year students are also required to take one course in Physical Education.

Distributional Requirements

The Distributional Requirements are designed to expose students to a variety of disciplines, approaches, and skills that, together, form the whole of a liberal arts education. The requirements are designed to be flexible; students choose from a wide spectrum of courses and take two courses each in languages, arts and humanities, social sciences, and sciences (one of which includes a lab). The Distributional Requirements may, of course, be satisfied within the major.

Modes of Thinking

At the heart of Foundations are the unique Modes of Thinking—which reflect our institutional mission, and by construction, emphasize the dynamic process of thinking over the certainty of knowing. Modes of Thinking include one course each in:

- **Thinking Locally—New York City**—where students examine the community and environment in which they find themselves as residents of New York City to better understand the significance of local context.
- **Thinking through Global Inquiry**—where students consider communities, places, and experiences beyond their immediate location, expanding their perspectives on the world and their place in it.
- **Thinking about Social Difference**—where students examine how difference is defined, lived, and challenged, and the disparities of power and resources in all their manifestations.
- **Thinking with Historical Perspective**—where students examine the ways in which historical context shapes and conditions the world, challenging them to see the past with fresh eyes.
- **Thinking Quantitatively and Empirically**—where students are exposed to numbers, data, graphs, and mathematical methods, in order to better understand quantitative and empirical approaches to thinking and problem solving.
- **Thinking Technologically and Digitally**—where students discover new ways of learning that open up innovative fields of study, including computational science and coding, digital arts and humanities, geographic information systems, and digital design.

As part of the curriculum’s flexibility, the Modes of Thinking courses and the Distributional Requirements often intersect. This means that some of the courses taken to satisfy the Distributional Requirements can also be used to satisfy the Modes of Thinking requirement, allowing certain classes to be double counted. However, it’s important to note that no student, regardless of her background or high school training, can place out of the General Education Requirements.

The Importance of the Major

Just as the General Education Requirements encourage interdisciplinary breadth, the Major Requirements ensure disciplinary depth. A well-conceived, rigorous major serves as both a springboard for pursuit after college and as an anchor for the rigorous study that defines a student’s experience at Barnard. Within the major, students find a community of like-minded scholars and develop close connections with faculty and other students in their departments.

By senior year, all students are prepared to undertake a major senior project or thesis, which serves as a capstone of their Barnard education. This semester- or year-long endeavor represents the culmination of academic work in the major and can take the form of a written thesis, supervised original research in a lab, a final creative project, and/or research completed within a dedicated senior seminar. Final senior work is celebrated by being publicly presented and displayed, and the abstracts for all senior projects are collected and published, effectively creating an archive of our students’ achievements.

A New Vision

Foundations is the result of a two-year process of College-wide inquiry and discovery. It is built on the principle that a Barnard education must reflect the value and identity as a liberal arts institution, be modern, flexible, equitable, and ambitious. With Foundations, our students will understand the innate value in thinking, critiquing, and challenging, emerging emboldened, transformed, and prepared to lead—the hallmark of what has made Barnard the choice for exceptional women for over 125 years.