

Discovery Breadth/Skills Categories

Biological Sciences

Biology is a branch of science that investigates the structure and function of living organisms. Scientists investigate ideas and observations that solidify our understanding of the diversity of life from single cells to complex organisms. Biology has deep relations with agriculture, chemistry, psychology, and many other fields of study, and it is the foundation of our knowledge regarding health and diseases. Individual courses under this category deal with the basic structure and function of medicine. Courses under this category deal with the basic structure and function of organisms, the interaction of organisms with their environment, human health, biotechnology, and the concepts and mechanisms of evolution as a fundamental biological paradigm. All courses will provide some understanding of the methods of scientific inquiry as it seeks knowledge about the living world.

Environment, Technology, and Society

The exponential growth of the sciences and engineering has bred an equally dramatic growth in technological advances. From the flint arrowhead to the latest communication, device or weapon, human beings have been inventing things and transforming their lives, their societies, and their environments as they do. But they seldom foresee all the transformations and consequences their inventions bring about. This category stresses the interplay between at least two of these three realms: environment, technology and society. Topics might include, but are not limited to, the history of a particular kind of technology (such as transport, fuel, writing, or weaponry), how technological change comes about in general, the scientific and/or social bases for a given technology, its impact for good or ill on human society and the natural environment, the effects of a changing environment on the arts and literature, and/or the ethical questions these topics raise.

Fine and Performing Arts

The arts communicate through the intellect, the emotions, and the body, sometimes all at once, in ways simple and subtle, direct and subliminal, gentle and soul-shaking. Understanding and appreciating them enriches our lives and preserves our cultural heritage for the future. Through its performances, publications, and exhibits, UNH offers many artistic experiences for students and the larger community, some of which are linked to courses under this category. Such courses, which may be about painting, sculpture, architecture, music, dance, theater, or film, will often include learning through practical experience.

Historical Perspectives

Even though we are faced daily with evidence of change in our social world and technology, we easily forget that how we live, where we live, and what we see around us are transient states of affairs. It is important to be able to look on one's own world with an imaginative grasp of its history and the forces behind that history. Courses under this category will give students the opportunity to learn about major historical developments and how these developments have shaped contemporary life in all its complexity. Through the study of particular periods and places, students will gain both "historical perspective" and some skill at the methods of historical inquiry. Common to all courses in historical analysis is the presumption that the categories of social analysis are themselves historical and historically contingent, and that to understand the past requires entering imaginatively into languages, institutions, and worldviews quite different from those of the present day.

Humanities

The humanities arose in Renaissance universities as an alternative to theology and consisted mainly of Greek and Latin literature, which dealt with any and every aspect of human life; they became central to the liberal arts. Since the nineteenth century, the humanities have also embraced modern literature, the creative arts, philosophy, and history. They focus on questions about meaning, ethics, aesthetics, and the foundations of knowledge; they are as concerned with form as with content. Courses under this category explore major works, ideas, and traditions that have shaped our understandings of the world and our sense of self at different times and places while examining the distinctive methods of humanistic inquiry.

Physical Sciences

The physical sciences seek to discover the components, structures, properties, and laws of the material world from subatomic particles to the entire universe. Through them, we appreciate both the wondrous complexity of the world and its order. The traditional domains of chemistry, physics, astronomy, cosmology, and earth sciences are the foundations of knowledge in numberless arenas of human activity, while the intersections between these domains and the biological sciences yield astonishing discoveries about living organisms. All courses will provide some understanding of the methods of scientific inquiry as it seeks knowledge about the physical universe, as well as evaluate claims about it in both technical literature and popular media.

Quantitative Reasoning

Quantitative reasoning refers to the ability to think critically and analytically using abstract formal methods with broad application. Mathematics is the foundation for the physical sciences and, increasingly, for the biological sciences. Its principles and processes illuminate significant aspects of the social sciences as well. In its most precise forms, it enables the design of bridges and the orbiting of satellites. Mathematics discloses invisible truths about the world, makes sense of patterns of which we may or may not be aware, and introduces some order to chaos. In its purest form, it creates its own world of beauty and logic. In its more applied forms, it attempts to make sense of individual and collective human behaviors and complex systems. Many courses listed under this category will help students appreciate the principles of mathematics and gain some skill in its applications to realistic situations, while other courses will introduce kindred subjects including symbolic logic, information theory, statistics, and computer science.

Social Sciences

The social sciences investigate human beings and their societies from the smallest bands of hunter gatherers to huge nations and global institutions. Everything from marriage and kinship to law and crime, from ceremonial gift giving to mortgage derivatives, from witchcraft to health insurance, from ancient ritual to modern communication, is a subject of a social science. As the world grows more interrelated and complex, the tools of the social sciences grow in importance. Courses under this category will explore different theories, methods, and data-gathering techniques as they apply to different social issues. They also will examine how individuals create, interact with, and are shaped by, social groups and institutions, including those associated with politics, economics, religion, family, the arts, health, and education.

World Cultures:

Living in a world of many cultures has created both cooperation and conflict across borders, among and between nations. This category, which includes intermediate language courses and approved study abroad programs, encourages students to become cosmopolitan citizens by gaining knowledge and understanding of cultures other than those of the United States. Students will learn to recognize others' values and, ultimately, accept the many ways in which we all are human. They are thus encouraged to see their own culture with fresh eyes and know the sheer diversity of human outlooks.