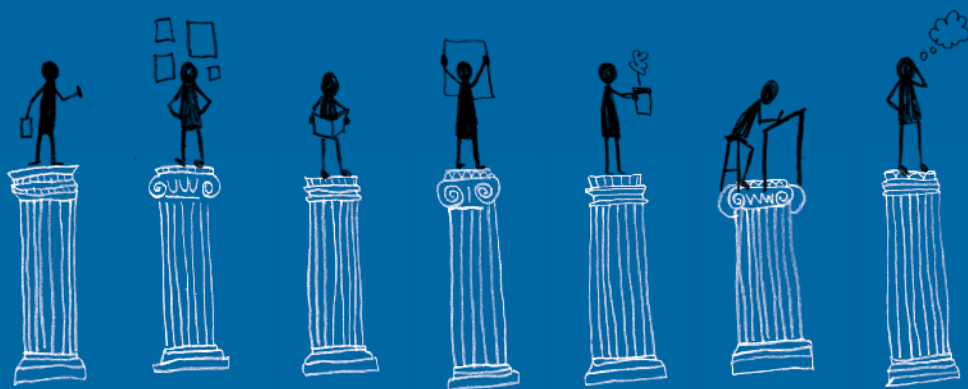
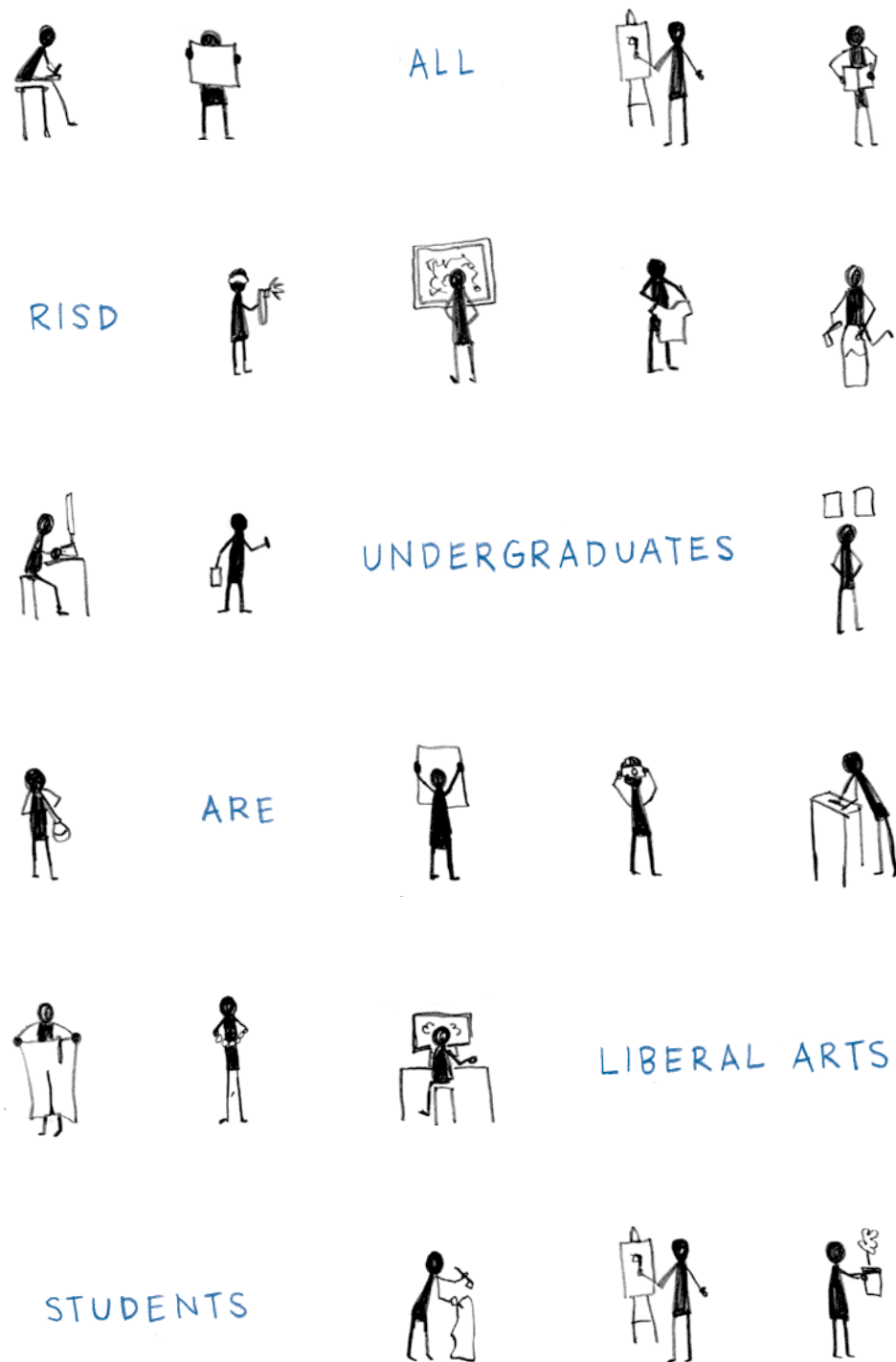


A GUIDE TO
LIBERAL ARTS



FOR RISD STUDENTS

As part of earning a bachelor's degree, all students devote a significant portion of their overall study at RISD to learning across the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Additional opportunities to focus one's study in a concentration, or minor, can augment one's studio major.



“My time in the Painting Department equipped me with the tools for expression. My time with RISD’s amazing Liberal Arts faculty helped me find out what it was I wanted to express.”

— DAVID BRYANT, BFA PAINTING, 2012



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WHAT ARE LIBERAL ARTS?

In ancient Greece and Rome, the liberal arts comprised the skills and attainments that were neither mechanical nor instrumental but rather those that specifically enabled free men to participate fully in public life.

Today, they are about expanding one’s understanding of human life in all its complexity, past and present, and through that shift of perspective, learning to sustain an outlook in everyday life that is more curious, empathetic, and responsive.



ORIGINS OF THE LIBERAL ARTS

The current system of university education in the West goes back to 13th-century Europe, where academic study of grammar, rhetoric, and logic was followed by several years of study in arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. Learning in the “seven liberal arts” was understood as a marker of intellectual and moral excellence. During the Renaissance, history, ethics, Greek, and poetry were added, further defining knowledge in the “humanities.”

“Rhode Island School of Design’s Division of Liberal Arts is dedicated to the development of responsible and responsive personalities, without which design education is not only futile but may even be socially unjustifiable.”

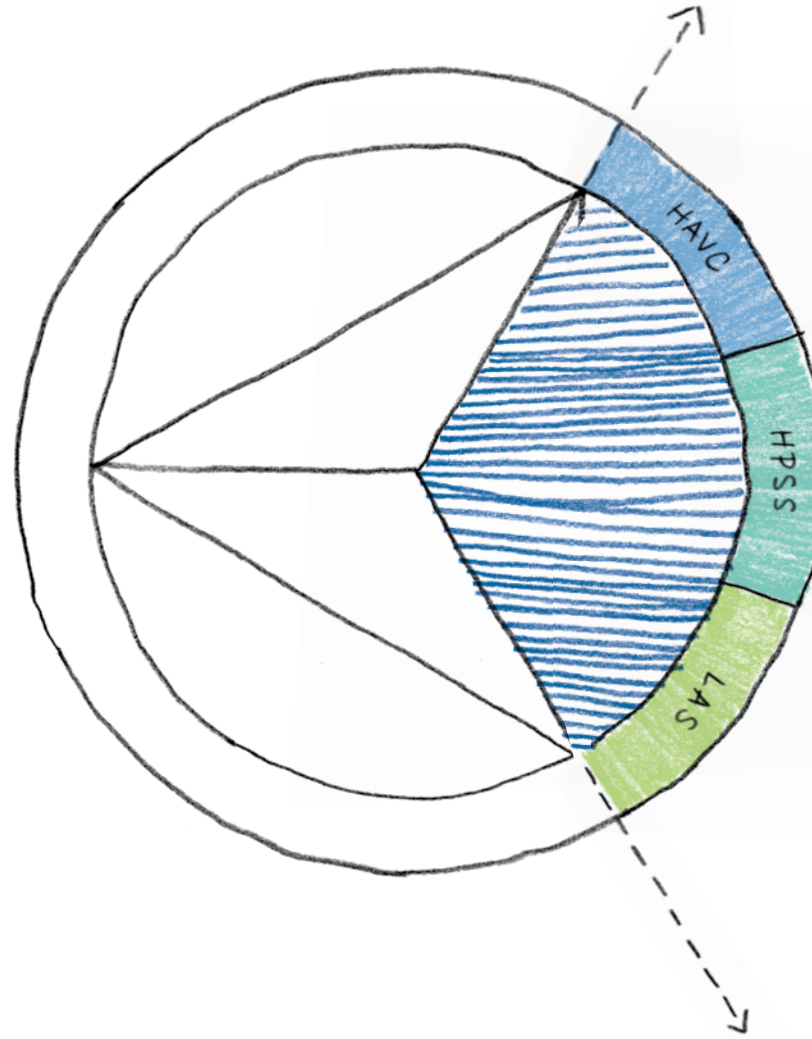
—JOHN R. FRAZIER, PROFESSOR OF PAINTING AND RISD PRESIDENT, 1956

LIBERAL ARTS AT RISD

Founded as an academic division in 1940, Liberal Arts is one of the major categories of “arts” offered at RISD, along with design and fine arts. It has had a significant role in the institution’s history. As early as 1901, RISD students in early Architecture and Modeling programs were required to take courses in Art History and English. In the 1930s, when the school began granting its first degrees, two years of English became required for art education majors, and a wide range of courses in art history, economics, French, history, physics, and public speaking were added to the curriculum. In 1956, leaders of the College specifically cited the importance of the humanities in training students for leadership in their fields and modified RISD’s degree requirements to create a balance between students’ general education and professional study.



STUDENTS TAKE A THIRD OF THEIR TOTAL COURSES AT RISD IN LIBERAL ARTS.



14 TOTAL COURSES REQUIRED

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY OF ART AND VISUAL CULTURE	4 COURSES INCLUDING H101* + H102*
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES	3 COURSES INCLUDING S101*
DEPARTMENT OF LITERARY ARTS AND STUDIES	3 COURSES INCLUDING E101*

*REQUIRED

4
ELECTIVE COURSES
(ANY LIBERAL ARTS DEPARTMENT)

THE POSSIBILITIES ARE NUMEROUS, AS LONG AS STUDENTS MAKE SURE THAT THE COURSES FULFILL THE DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE.

FOR A YEAR-BY-YEAR OVERVIEW, SEE PAGE 8

DEPARTMENTS + PROGRAMS

HISTORY OF ART AND VISUAL CULTURE (HAVC)

risd.edu/academics/havc

ART AND MEDIA ACROSS TIME
PERIODS AND CULTURES.

HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES (HPSS)

risd.edu/academics/hpss

HUMAN LIFE AND
CULTURE FROM MULTIPLE
DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES.

LITERARY ARTS AND STUDIES (LAS)

risd-english.com

LITERARY WORKS, MEDIA, HISTORIES,
ISSUES AND PRACTICES FROM A RANGE
OF TIME PERIODS AND CULTURES.

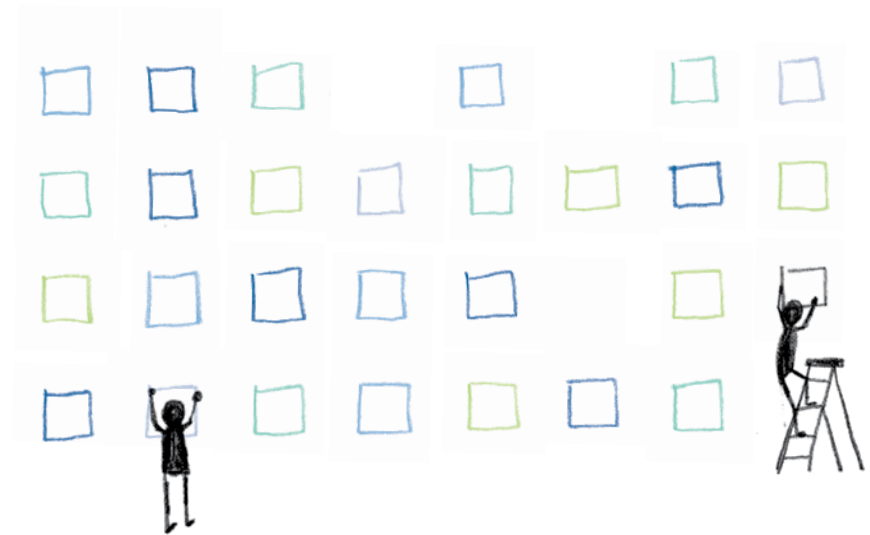
SCIENCE FOR ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION (SADE)

NATURAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES
ESPECIALLY AS RELATED TO ART
AND DESIGN PRACTICE.

NATURE, CULTURE, SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES (NCSS)

risdncss.wordpress.com/about

COLLEGE-WIDE CONCENTRATION
IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL
HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES.



MANY DISCIPLINES

The tendency at art and design schools is to think of the liberal arts as a single academic area that is “not studio.” However, the term “liberal arts” includes many disciplines, from philosophy to botany, literature to archaeology, each with its own history, methods, debates, and expectations.



BUT NOT ALL DISCIPLINES

Liberal arts are by definition not utilitarian or professional, so they do not include university fields such as business, engineering, law, or medicine. Some disciplines have both theoretical and applied approaches (theater or computer science, for example); whether or not courses in those disciplines count for liberal arts credit depends on the specific content of the course and the expertise of the instructor.



DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

“More than achieving the competence to solve problems and perform complex tasks, education means attaining and sustaining curiosity and humility.” — ANDREW DELBANCO, *COLLEGE*

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4
14 Liberal Arts COURSES	4	4	3	3
4 HAVC	H101* H102*			
3 HPSS	S101*			
3 LAS	E101*			
4 ELECTIVES				

*REQUIRED

MORE THAN

250

COURSES OFFERED BY
THE DIVISION OF LIBERAL
ARTS EACH YEAR

LESS THAN

30

STUDENTS IN EACH CLASS,
EXCEPT FOR THE REQUIRED
ART HISTORY SURVEY

FIRST-YEAR REQUIREMENTS

All first-year students are required to take four courses: H101, H102, E101, and S101. There are no waivers or substitutions for these courses. Beyond this first-year curriculum, students take electives across the departments.

COURSE NAMES AND NUMBERS

All courses in Liberal Arts have either a departmental prefix (HAVC, HPSS, or LAS) or a general prefix (LAEL), which means that they are electives in areas that fall outside the core curricula of the existing departments.

COURSE CREDIT

Credit for courses is determined by the department head of each Liberal Arts department, according to a course's sponsoring department, the instructor's credentials, syllabus content, and methods of assessment. Departments in Liberal Arts represent very different disciplines; credit is not interchangeable.

TRANSFER CREDIT

After matriculation, students can receive transfer credit up to four courses (12 credits). Courses taken at Brown during the academic year are exempt from this limit. All courses, once transferred, will receive credit in the RISD system according to their fit with the Liberal Arts departments. International courses transferred to RISD have to also have the same amount of contact hours as RISD courses to receive credit.



LIBERAL ARTS FACULTY

100+

FACULTY MEMBERS



with PhDs from

BROWN
COLUMBIA
CUNY
HARVARD
PENN STATE
RUTGERS
TEMPLE
UCLA
U. CALIFORNIA
BERKELEY
U. ESSEX

and Expertise in

RACE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY
URBAN STUDIES
POSTCOLONIAL HISTORY AND THEORY
MUSEUM STUDIES
PERCEPTION
AESTHETICS
GLOBAL FILM AND MEDIA
FOOD STUDIES
ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
PERFORMANCE STUDIES
HISTORY AND THEORY OF DESIGN



All Liberal Arts faculty are associated with one of our three departments. Faculty research and teaching interests both sustain those disciplinary identities and cut across them to represent cutting-edge areas of scholarly inquiry.

ELECTIVES

Students fulfill distribution requirements in Liberal Arts by selecting courses from a roster of introductory courses in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences, as well as upper-level seminars in specialized topics, methods, or issues. The curriculum is infused with 40–50 new courses annually, based on new areas of faculty research, grant-funded initiatives, and collaborations.

SELECTED FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

Mary Bergstein

In Looking Back One Learns to See: Marcel Proust and Photography (2014)

STUDIES PROUST'S VISUAL IMAGINATION, HIS VISUAL METAPHORS, PHOTOGRAPHIC RESOURCES, AND IMAGININGS.

Mairéad Byrne

You have to Laugh: New & Selected Poems (2013)

Daniel Cavicchi

Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum (2011)

Jonathan Highfield

Imagined Topographies: From Colonial Resource to Postcolonial Homeland (2012)

EXAMINES THE WAYS ARTISTS, WRITERS, AND MUSICIANS CREATE NEW MEANING IN FORMERLY COLONIZED SPACES.

Joon Lee

94 (2015)

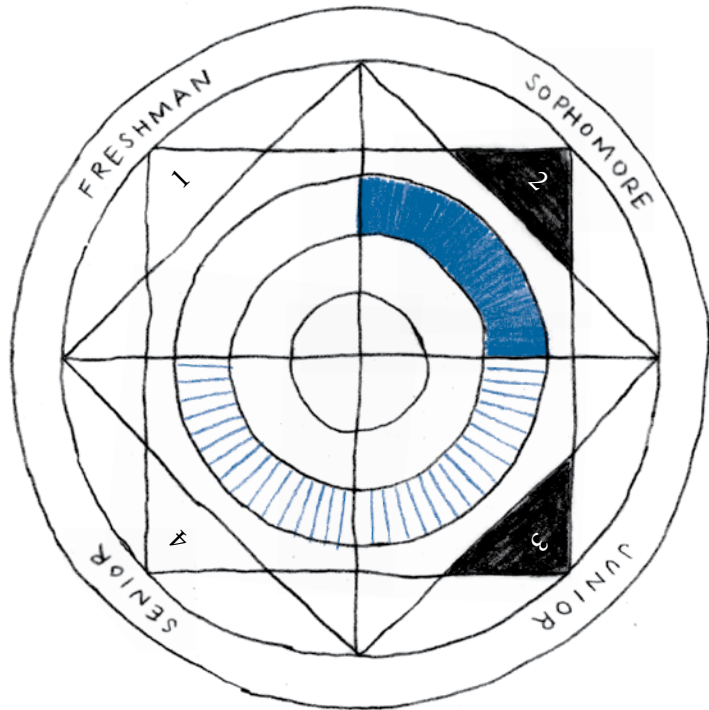
Yuriko Saito

Everyday Aesthetics (2008/2010)

Damian White

Environments, Natures & Social Theory: Towards Critical Hybridities (2015)

EXPLORES HOW ISSUES AROUND THE ENVIRONMENT PROVOKE ETHICAL, CULTURAL, SCIENTIFIC AND POLITICAL DEBATES.



“Whether it was taking a course focused on immigration or on sports, I have been able to analyze the distribution of power within a society and the effects of democracy in an organization or an entire country....This has opened up my education to not only think like a designer, but to be aware of the workings of the culture and society.”

— ASHLEY KOCHISS, BFA ARCHITECTURE & HPSS CONCENTRATOR

ADVISING

Walk-in advising about degree requirements is provided in the Liberal Arts Office; just come by during business hours.

Advising about broader learning goals, from course selection to career choices, is provided by faculty. Thus every sophomore at RISD is assigned a Liberal Arts faculty advisor. Concentrators in Liberal Arts departments work with their respective concentration coordinator, a faculty member who oversees students’ progress through the concentration.

Enrollment policies and forms are easily obtained at the Registrar’s Office online site: risd.edu/registrar

CONCENTRATIONS

Over 150 students concentrate, or minor, in Liberal Arts each year. Concentrating means fulfilling all your degree requirements in Liberal Arts by taking a set of courses that focus on an academic subject, from art history to politics and policy. Students have the freedom, within the established curriculum, to follow diverse interests and meaningfully shape how their liberal arts learning might complement their studio work.

HAVC: www.risd.edu/academics/havc/concentration

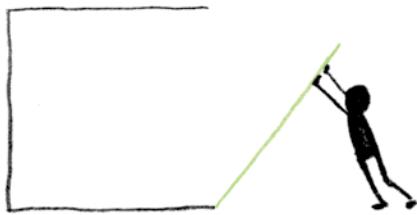
HPSS: www.risd.edu/academics/hpss/concentration

LAS: www.risd.edu/academics/las/concentration

NCSS: www.risd.edu/academics/concentrations



Certain principles support all Liberal Arts classes, projects, and requirements.



CUMULATIVE LEARNING

The Liberal Arts curriculum is not a grab bag, a way to randomly fulfill requirements or to poach for useful ideas. Rather, it is meant to provide you with sustained engagement with the world of scholarship and, over your time at RISD, increased depth of understanding.



SLOW KNOWLEDGE

The deep literacy expected in Liberal Arts learning serves as an alternative to fast and immediate engagement. The Liberal Arts are challenging in scope and content and require time—for reflection, comparison, consideration, and debate.



INTERANIMATION

Unlike many other art schools, RISD's Liberal Arts curriculum is not directly integrated with studio learning but rather exists independently, as a complement to studio work. In fact, it is set up to cultivate the various ways—often unexpected—that different disciplines of professional practice and scholarship can inspire or animate each other.

STUDIO AND LIBERAL ARTS

CROSS-LISTING AND COLLABORATION

Every year, there are a number of courses that bring together faculty from different departments. “Cross-listed” courses feature course content that applies to different departments equally; such courses have multiple kinds of credit. Collaborations provide special learning opportunities of team-teaching or a linked course/studio, where disciplines are brought together in novel and experimental ways. Rethinking Green Urbanism, for example, weds urban sociology with architecture around the issue of a sustainable future; the Witness Tree Project gives students a chance to work with historic trees from national historic sites in both a history seminar and a furniture studio.

DIFFERENCES

Classes and studios are not the same. They have different rhythms, skills, and expectations. A successful scholarly paper, for example, follows a clear sequence to make a persuasive argument. By contrast, a successful studio object often abides by very different principles of layering, association, and provocation. Making sense of these differences means negotiating among multiple discourses and expectations, from lecture or seminar to studio or workshop.

RECENT COLLABORATIVE COURSES

RISD-LEGO Project (LAS/ID)
 Art School Histories (HAVC/MUSEUM)
 Illustrating Dante’s Comedy (LAS/ILLUSTRATION)
 Exploring Art and Science of Biodiversity in Guyana (LAS/SADE)
 Re-Imagining Cities (HAVC/FOUNDATION STUDIES)
 The Exhibition: History and Theory (HAVC/INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE)
 Rethinking Green Urbanism (HPSS/ARCHITECTURE)
 Witness Tree Project (HPSS/FURNITURE DESIGN)
 In Conversation: Photography, Philosophy, And Cultural Studies (HPSS/LAS)

LIBERAL ARTS–STUDIO COURSE MODELS



SEPARATE



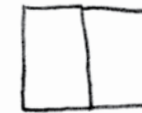
REALIZED



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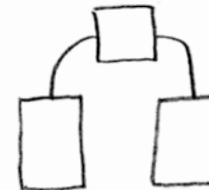
BLURRED



TEAM



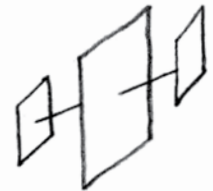
EXERCISE



FACILITATED



MODULAR



FRAMED

GLOSSARY

Arts Skills that result from learning. Fine arts, design arts, and liberal arts involve different skills and different kinds of learning.

Brown Cross-Registration Form Registrar's Office form that indicates your intended enrollment for a course at Brown. Requires Liberal Arts approval.

Concentration An accumulation of 21–27 credits in a subject area; similar to a degree minor. See Concentration Requirements.

Course Credit The type of departmental credit awarded to a course, determined by sponsoring department, instructor's credentials, and syllabus content. Important for distribution requirements.

Concentration Requirements Courses, or categories of courses, that reconfigure a student's electives for the degree to provide more focused study than usual.

Credit Hours A measurement of the amount of credits earned for a course, based on contact hours between instructor and student. Not uniform across institutions, especially internationally.

Cross-Listed Course A course with multiple kinds of credit across one or more departments. It is indicated by a "C" in the course number.

Degree Requirements Courses, or categories of courses, that all students must take to complete a bachelor of fine arts, or master of fine arts, degree.

Department An administrative unit representing an academic discipline or closely related disciplines.

Discipline An academic branch of knowledge, often defined by subject and method.

Distribution Requirements Courses taken in distinctly different subject areas to create breadth of learning for a bachelor's degree.

Division A broad administrative unit that provides oversight of multiple academic departments.

Elective An academic course that isn't specifically required but that a student chooses to take; counts toward the total credits required for a degree.

HAVC Department of History of Art and Visual Culture.

HPSS Department of History, Philosophy, and the Social Sciences.

Independent Study An individualized course on an academic topic, developed under the guidance of a professor. Sometimes used for academic internships in Liberal Arts.

LAS Department of Literary Arts and Studies.

Lecture A type of course, larger than a seminar, in which an instructor introduces and explains a topic; may also involve discussion.

Liberal Arts Skills of human understanding, cultivated for participation in public life.

NCSS Concentration in Nature, Culture, Sustainability Studies.

Prior Approval Form Form for obtaining approval for all post-matriculation transfer credit in Liberal Arts; submitted before enrollment.

SADE Science for Art and Design Education.

Seminar A small, advanced, discussion-based class, usually focused on study of a specific research question or area of disciplinary inquiry.

Substitution A course that is used in place of another, often to fulfill a degree requirement.

Transcript The official record of a student's academic performance, maintained by the Registrar.

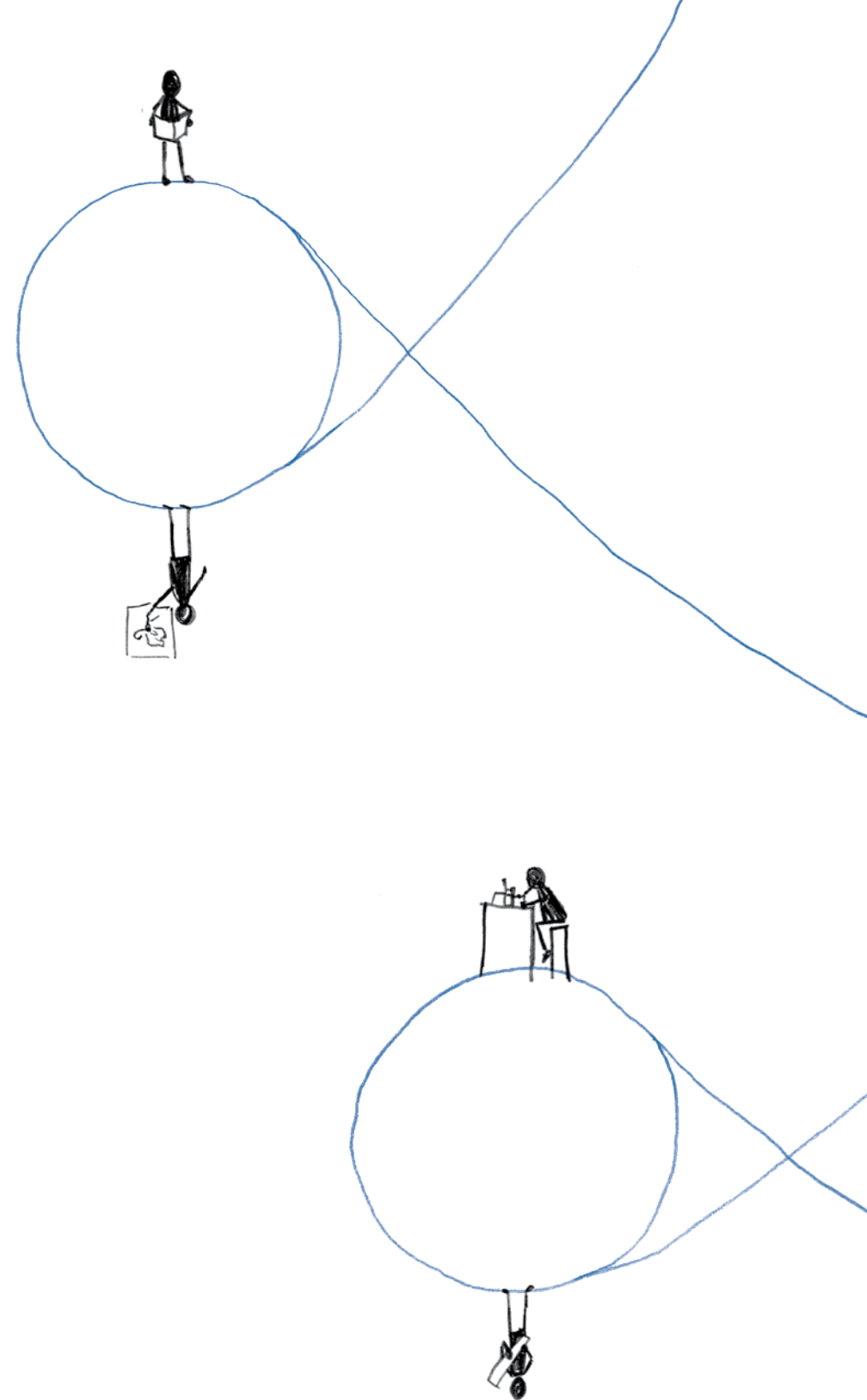
Transfer credit Credit earned at another college or university that may count at RISD, if approved.

Travel course A course that involves a significant amount of travel or fieldwork to cultivate learning.

Waiver An official exemption from a course requirement. Not to be confused with Substitution.

Workshop A small class devoted to creating, critiquing, and revising student work.





From Foundation year on, the interplay between liberal arts and studio courses will help you make unexpected discoveries.





1. Check with Gail Hughes in the Liberal Arts Office (ghughes@risd.edu) or go to the Liberal Arts Division page on info.risd.edu to find forms, policies, and instructions.
2. Contact your academic advisor, whether in Foundation, your major, or Liberal Arts. Names and contact information should be available on your Student Planning page.
3. See the appropriate department head of HAVC, HPSS, or LAS. Names and contact information are on the department pages on info.risd.edu.

Questions about registration can be answered by the RISD Registrar:
risd.edu/registrar

Questions about credit, transfer credit, and progress on Liberal Arts can be answered by the Liberal Arts Division Office staff.

ONLINE

Liberal Arts at RISD: www.risd.edu/academics/division-of-liberal-arts

Liberal Arts Division Information: info.risd.edu/liberal-arts

Liberal Arts on Twitter: twitter.com/RISDLiberalArts

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