

## **Master of Arts in Liberal Studies**

The Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) program is one of the most innovative degrees offered through the College of Arts and Sciences at Oakland University. Established in 2003, it currently offers a graduate level interdisciplinary education to over thirty students.

Oakland's program is part of a nation-wide movement to provide graduate education for intellectually curious and academically-oriented individuals who wish to explore a broad range of topics typical of liberal studies undergraduate education at a more complex and rigorous level. Well over one hundred graduate liberal studies programs are offered across the country, from small liberal arts colleges to major research universities. Oakland University's MALS program is a participating member of the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs (AGLSP).

In the MALS program, students pursue a course of study in more than one discipline. Exploring subjects in the Humanities can be combined with an interest in the Social Sciences, for example, enabling students to explore a variety of subjects across the academic spectrum in a way no other graduate degree can offer.

This handbook is intended as a guide for current and potential students. It includes information on the application process as well as courses, faculty, program requirements, scholarships, and student resources. Further information and announcements can be found on the program Web site: [www.oakland.edu/mals](http://www.oakland.edu/mals).

## **Overview of the Program**

Oakland University's Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program offers a highly challenging interdisciplinary exploration of the Liberal Arts. It is designed for post-baccalaureate students wishing to broaden their education through a rigorous course of study that combines the methodologies and subject matter of four different academic disciplines:

- Humanities including Art and Art History; History; Philosophy; Music; Theater; Dance; and Cinema Studies.
- Literature and Language including Modern Languages; Linguistics; Rhetoric; Communication; Journalism; and American, British, and World Literature.
- Social Sciences including Sociology; Anthropology; Political Science; Psychology; Religious Studies; and Women and Gender Studies.
- Sciences including Biology; Chemistry; Mathematics; Physics; and Environmental Science.

The program is designed primarily for students who pursue their graduate studies part-time, with required courses taught in the evenings during the regular academic year. Electives are offered both in the evenings and during the day, and are available during summer semesters. Students who wish to pursue their education full-time may complete the degree in as little as two years.

## **Who Are MALS Students and What Can You Do with this Degree?**

The MALS program, because of its interdisciplinary nature, opens for students a wide variety of areas for study. It also opens the doors for not only personal, but professional advancement and growth. MALS graduates have found that their degree has served to advance their existing careers, as well as finding new careers in education, law, social services, business, public service, criminal justice, and health related industries. Some of our students have combined their study with teacher training programs. Others have advanced to other kinds of graduate study. The program produces graduates who can offer employers proven analytical ability, superior problem solving, fresh perspectives, and excellent research and writing skills.

MALS students come from diverse backgrounds. Some are recent college graduates returning for more education while others have spent more time away from the classroom building careers and families. What MALS students share is a desire to broaden their understanding of the world around them. As graduate students, they come together to form an invigorating community of intellectually curious and highly-motivated learners in an environment where discussion and individual research is encouraged.

MALS graduates offer employers a proven ability to solve problems through excellent research and writing skills, as well as fresh perspectives born of the interdisciplinary nature of the program. Graduates enter careers in social services, business, government, criminal justice, and other fields. Some students combine their MALS degree with teacher training programs.

### **Application Requirements**

The basic requirements for admission to the program are:

- A baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university.
- An undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- A minimum of two strong letters of recommendation.
- A personal statement outlining motivation for applying to the program, personal goals, and relevant life experiences.

### **How to Apply**

The application form is available online at [www.oakland.edu/grad](http://www.oakland.edu/grad). Supplementary materials including transcript, letters of recommendation, and personal statement must be mailed directly to the Graduate Admission Office:

Oakland University  
Graduate Admissions  
520 O'Dowd Hall  
Rochester, MI 48309-4401

You may also call the Graduate Admissions Office at (248) 370-2700 to request an application form and/or additional information on graduate study at Oakland.

Should you have questions specifically about MALS, please contact the program's administrative assistant at (248) 370-2154 during regular business hours.

### When to Apply

Applications are due three months prior to the beginning of the semester in which the student wishes to begin study. Applications for Fall semester are due June 1.

### Degree Requirements

The MALS degree requires a total of 36 credit hours. The following list summarizes the categories necessary for graduation; the content of the courses varies from year to year.

- The Liberal Studies Colloquium (4 credits) provides an overview of Liberal Studies' methods and issues, as well as exploration of a topic from an interdisciplinary perspective. The topic of the colloquium changes each year.
- Two four credit core seminars (8 credits) chosen from Humanities, Social Sciences, Literature and Languages, or Science. Seminar topics change each year.
- Five four credit electives (20 credits), with at least one from each of the core disciplines.
- Master's Thesis or Project (4 credits).

Up to eight graduate credits completed at another accredited institution may be applied toward the degree requirements. Credit transfer must be approved by the program's executive committee and is subject to the conditions indicated in Oakland University's Transfer Credit Policy in the graduate catalog. Up to eight graduate credit hours from another Oakland University school may be applied, subject to the approval of the executive committee.

All students in the program are expected to maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average to remain in the program. Failure to maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA may result in dismissal from the program. Two course grades below a 3.0 render a student subject to dismissal, as does one course grade 2.5 or below. No course with a grade below a 2.7 will be counted toward graduation.

### Financial Aid, Scholarships, and Awards

For information on financial aid for graduate students, including grants, scholarships, loans, and payment plans, please contact Student Financial Services at (248) 370-2550 or email [finservices@oakland.edu](mailto:finservices@oakland.edu). You may arrange a personal meeting with an advisor, or use the links found at [www.oakland.edu/financialservices](http://www.oakland.edu/financialservices) for more information. Below are several examples of grants, scholarships, and assistantships for which MALS students may apply:

#### *University Research Committee Opportunities*

Students may apply for a University Student Research Award and a Student Travel Grant. Applications are reviewed twice a year. The deadlines are the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in November and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in February.

The Student Research Award (\$500) may be requested to pay for supplies, minor items of equipment, technical services, and travel costs as specified on the University Research Committee Web site at [www.oakland.edu/research](http://www.oakland.edu/research).

The Student Travel Grant (\$400) may be requested to fund travel to support the presentation of research results at a professional conference as specified on the aforementioned URC Web site.

#### *Alumni Association Returning Alumni Scholarship*

This \$3,000 one-year, non-renewable scholarship is available to Oakland University alumni who have earned at least one prior degree from OU. You must be admitted into a 2<sup>nd</sup> undergraduate, or graduate degree program and be enrolled in at least 8 credit hours per semester and maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 for the duration of the award. More information is available at [www.oualumni.com/OUAAAscholarships](http://www.oualumni.com/OUAAAscholarships).

#### *Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Graduate Assistantship*

The MALS Graduate Assistant provides administrative support to the director by promoting the MALS program within and outside of the university. She or he supports the program and curriculum in a variety of ways, including newsletter writing and editing, classroom support, tutoring, and event planning.

The position includes tuition for two classes per semester during the regular academic year, and a monthly stipend. It is renewable for up to two years. For more information, please contact the program director.

### **Courses**

#### Core Seminars

##### LBS 5940 – Introductory Colloquium (4 credits)

Introduction to Liberal Studies. Acquaints students with graduate-level skills, methods, and materials. Considers problems specific to interdisciplinary study and research, as well as ongoing debates about the nature and role of the Liberal Arts. Examples of previous courses include: *Feminism & Knowledge*; *The Great War and Western Civilization*, *Heroes, Villains, and Fools*; *Romanticism: The Eternal Return*

##### LBS 5941 – Seminar in Language and Literature (4 credits)

Seminar organized around a single topic or question from Language and Literature. Examples of past courses include: *The Writer in Nature: To Wonder and Wander*; *Faust: At the Crossroads of Good and Evil*.

##### LBS 5942 – Seminar in the Humanities (4 credits)

Seminar organized around a single topic or question from the Humanities. Examples of past courses include: *Dublin's Easter Rising, 1916*, *Fin de Siecle Europe*, *History and Hope: Consciousness, Persons, and Free Will*; *French Culture through Film*

LBS 5943 – Seminar in the Social Sciences (4 credits)

Seminar organized around a single topic or question from the Social Sciences. Examples of past courses include: *Politics through Literature*; *War: The Hidden Religion*; *The Common Good*.

LBS 5944 – Seminar in the Sciences (4 credits)

Seminar organized around a single topic or question from the Sciences. Examples of past courses include: *Science and Religion*; *The Nuclear Age*; *Evil Genes*.

Elective Courses

Note: Prerequisites for electives include admission to the MALS program and specified prerequisites for cross-listed courses.

LBS 5900 – Topics in Language and Literature (4 credits)

A course cross-listed with a graduate course in Language and Literature, which includes English; Linguistics; Modern Languages and Literatures; Writing; Communication; and Journalism. Examples of past courses include: *Ethical Issues in Media*; *Culture and Communication*; *Critical Approach to Pop Music*.

LBS 5902 – Topics in the Humanities (4 credits)

A course cross-listed with a graduate course in the Humanities, which includes Art and Art History; History; Philosophy; Music; Theater; and Dance. Examples of past courses include: *Ethics, Language, & Reality*; *History of Photography*; *Philosophy of Science, European Thought and Ideology, Ireland 1690 to the Present*

LBS 5904 – Topics in the Social Sciences (4 credits)

A course cross-listed with a graduate course in the Social Sciences, which includes Economics; Political Science; Psychology; Sociology; and Anthropology. Examples of past courses include: *Racial & Ethnic Relations*; *Religion and Politics*; *Social Welfare Policies*.

LBS 5906 – Topics in the Sciences (4 credits)

A course cross-listed with a graduate course in the Sciences, which includes Biology; Chemistry; Mathematics and Statistics; and Physics. Examples of past courses include: *African Environmental History*; *Permaculture Theory & Practice*; *Organic Farming in an Urban Setting*.

LBS 5970 – Independent Study (2 or 4 credits)

Independent research on a specific topic, extending previous coursework or exploring a topic not covered in available courses. Arrangements with a faculty member must be in place prior to registration. Prerequisites: LBS 5940, two core seminars, two electives, permission of instructor, and permission of program director.

LBS 6996 – Master's Thesis or Project

Students are to enroll in this course during the semester in which they write their Master's Thesis or Project. Prerequisites: LBS 5940, two core seminars, five electives, permission of program director.

### **Master's Thesis or Project**

The Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Thesis Project (LBS 6996) is the final requirement for the degree and should be the sole focus of the final semester. The project must reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the preceding years of study by including methods and content derived from at least two disciplines.

Students are advised to begin thinking about their final thesis or project once they have completed 20-24 credits in the program. A meeting with the director or a member of the executive committee at this point in the program is helpful in shaping the thesis project and completing it in a timely manner.

There are several steps to be taken *before* the semester in which you intend to complete your thesis project:

- In consultation with the program director, identify a three-person faculty committee to guide and advise you through the completion of your thesis project. The committee should have one faculty member from each of two disciplines involved in the thesis or project. One professor will serve as your committee chair.
- Work with your committee chair to draft a proposal for your thesis or project. Proposals vary in length from five to ten pages, and a full prospective bibliography should be submitted as well. All committee members must approve the final draft prior to its submission to the executive committee.
- After committee approval, submit your proposal to the director who will present it to the executive committee. Please note that approval is not automatic; you may need to make revisions and should allow time for this process.
- Upon approval from the executive committee, you may register for LBS 6996. At this point you may also apply for graduation. The graduation application deadline can be found in the university's academic calendar.

It is helpful to set a schedule of meetings with your committee and establish deadlines in consultation with the committee in order to keep your work on schedule. Critical will be your production of drafts submitted to committee members to evaluate along the way. Generally, your final thesis or project should be submitted to each committee member with the Master's Thesis Completion Form three weeks prior to the end of the semester in order to allow your committee time to evaluate the work and assign a grade. If you and your committee decide additional time may be needed for completion of your thesis or project, contact the program director for guidance.

If you choose to write a thesis, you should plan to submit a written work that is between 70 and 100 pages in length. If you intend to produce a project other than a thesis, both your committee and the program director must approve. Please note that any written work should

conform to the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* and needs to conform to the form stipulated by the Graduate Office. Students need to meet with someone in the Graduate Office to make sure they understand that office's requirements.

Questions about the process or requirements can be discussed with the program director at any time during your course of study. You can also find more information on the program Web site: [www.oakland.edu/mals](http://www.oakland.edu/mals).

### **Examples of Previous Colloquia and Seminars**

LBS 5940 – Introductory Colloquium: “The Great War and Western Civilization”

Professor Seán Farrell Moran, Program Director  
Department of History

This colloquium will consider what Europeans call “The Great War” and its impact upon Western civilization. Using this subject as our foundation, we will explore the value of the Liberal Arts and interdisciplinary work in our increasingly specialized world. Most of our emphasis in class will focus on the European dimensions of the war. Although it took place a century ago, it has emerged in European public opinion as the most important event in modern European history. We will consider why that is so, exploring its impact on society, the individual, culture, and on some of the key ideas of the modern age such as progress and historical memory. The course will make use of a variety of disciplinary perspectives on this topic to familiarize students with the interdisciplinary nature of Liberal Studies.

LBS 5941 – Seminar in Language and Literature: “The Writer in Nature: To Wonder and Wander”

Professor Peter Markus, 2012 Kresge Arts in Detroit Fellow and Senior Writer with the InsideOut Literary Arts Project of Detroit  
Guest Lecturer

This is a seminar aimed to engage students into the art and act of wondering and wandering (both in mind and body) which, in short, really means that we'll be spending our class time both reading critically and creatively and generating our own writings in response to what we encounter in nature and language and through ourselves: the body, in other words, as a receptor for reverie. We will look at texts in multiple genres that will invite our attentions toward curiosity – to read, to write, to discover what we think, what we see, what we believe – what, in short, is our reason for being. Students will be expected to read as writers who lean on the words of others to find the source of your own voice. Students will be expected to share their own writing with the class in a workshop setting and to read and respond to the work of their fellow classmates.

LBS 5942 – Seminar in the Humanities: “History and Hope”

Professor Charles Mabee, former Director of the Religious Studies Program

Key impact ideas: “Avoiding the Apocalypse: Does History Provide Evidence of Hope?” and “Great Ideas and Figures of the Past Who Have Pointed to a Promising Human Future.” The figures that we will examine include traditional religious “apostles” of hope in the pre-Enlightenment world, such as Confucius, Muhammad, and Paul of Tarsus; as well as later “ambassadors” of hope chosen from a variety of important historical and social locations in the post-Enlightenment world, such as Roger Williams, Black Elk, Sojourner Truth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Mohandas Gandhi, and Eleanor Roosevelt. Key books that recount their historical experiences will be read and discussed by individual class members.

The class will provide opportunities for students to “dive deeply” into the unique experience of realistic hope in spite of often nearly insurmountable odds and historical circumstances.

LBS 5943 – Seminar in the Social Sciences: “Common Good”  
Professor Charles Mabee, former Director of the Religious Studies Program

This course explores the idea of the common good as it cuts across various social sciences. Economic theory as agency informs about norms and values that contribute to the overall wealth and productivity of society, as well as the manner in which wealth is distributed. In sociological terms, it pursues the idea that all members of society have a contributing role to play in its creative development, thereby working against specialized technical elites acquiring undue influence over the voice and insights of the broader culture.

Following the discipline of political science, we discuss visions of democratic openness and vitality that work against the application of political power commanded by the few over the voice of the many. In addition, we reconsider the concept of the common good in terms of determining what factors have historically contributed to a healthy, hopeful and vital society for all, and which lead to inevitable decay, pessimism and collapse.

LBS 5944 – Seminar in the Sciences: “Feeding the World: Is the ‘Green Revolution’ the Problem or the Solution?”

Professor Fay Hansen  
Department of Biological Sciences

This seminar explores questions concerning “feeding the world,” integrating science, public policy, and globalization. The “Green Revolution” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is being followed by a push for a “Second Green Revolution” in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What are the driving forces, why are these controversial today, and what are the alternatives?

### **Some of our MALS Faculty**

**Seán Farrell Moran**, Director of the MALS program and Associate Professor of History, is a historian of modern Great Britain, Ireland, Europe, and the history of ideas. He has a Ph.D. in history from American University as well as additional training in philosophy, theology, and psychoanalysis. He has taught for more than 25 years at Oakland University, and taught more than twenty different courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

His research and publications have focused on Irish nationalism, and he is the author of one of the standard books in that field, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption*. He has published more than thirty book chapters, articles, and reviews. He has served on the national executive committees of the American Conference for Irish Studies (ACIS) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), and as book review editor on *H-Net* as well as *The Oakland Journal*. He is currently working on a history of the idea of hope in Western civilization; the psychology of revolutionary violence and terrorism; and a murder mystery set in Dublin in 1913. **PICTURE?**

**Alan Epstein**, Professor of Political Science, joined the faculty of Oakland University in 1997. Born and raised in Flint, Michigan, he earned his undergraduate degree from University of Michigan at Flint in Political Science, and his Ph.D. from Cornell University in Government. Epstein was presented with the Excellence in Teaching Award from Oakland University in 2005. His interest and specialization in contemporary Chinese politics and foreign policy were deepened during extended periods of study and teaching in Taiwan, Hong Kong and on the Chinese mainland. Further areas of interest include disembodied and substantive democracy as well as liberatory political philosophy and alternative social systems. **PICTURE?**

**Jon Carroll** joined Oakland University as Visiting Assistant Professor in 2013 and has been Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice since 2014. He completed his doctoral dissertation in Anthropology at Michigan State University. His research interests lie in cultural transmission, social interaction and integration, political and economic organization, and social science applications of Geographic Information Systems and computer modeling and simulation. Carroll is also a Registered Professional Archaeologist who specializes in the archaeology of the Eastern Woodlands. **PICTURE?**

**Fay Hansen**, Associate Professor of Biological Sciences, is a biologist who originally trained in the biomedical field. For more than twenty years she has taught anatomy at OU and she has pursued an active research program in cardiovascular disease. Hansen has always had a passion for the environment, and after training at MSU's Student Organic Farm, she established OU's Campus Student Organic Farm, emphasizing an applied approach to raising food sustainably and responsibly. She now teaches Farming, Permaculture, the Biology of Food, and a capstone Biology course that examines current scientific issues through themes linked to food. **PICTURE?**

**Charles Mabee**, former director of the Religious Studies program at Oakland University and the M.Div. program at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary earned his Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate School in California. He has been teaching courses in religious studies at Oakland University since 1990. His field of specialization is Biblical hermeneutics, with a sub-specialty in the Hebrew Bible. His passion is the mining of ancient wisdom from the standpoint of today's problems and issues. Within the context of religion and philosophy, he is "most interested in the problem of war and its debilitating effect on society and culture." **PICTURE?**

**Valerie Palmer-Mehta** earned her Pd.D. in Communication Studies from Wayne State University in 2002. She currently serves as an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication and Journalism. As a specialist in feminist rhetorical studies, her research and teaching interests are located at the intersection of Rhetorical Studies and Gender Studies.

**PICTURE?**

### **Program Publications**

The Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program also publishes a newsletter.. The newsletter includes information about future courses, travel opportunities, and student and alumni news. It also provides students the opportunity to contribute writing samples through paper abstracts, essays, and commentaries.

Copies of past newsletters can be found online at [www.oakland.edu/mals/spectrum](http://www.oakland.edu/mals/spectrum).

### **Current MALS Executive Committee 2017-2018**

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