

Selecting the Right Course

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about course selection and the factors you must consider to choose the right course. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Types of Courses: General Education, Required, Elective

When you choose courses, you need to think about which courses you want to take and which courses you have to take. Typically, there are three types of courses you'll be considering: general education courses, courses required for your degree program, and elective courses.

Type of Course	Description
General education courses	These are "core requirements" that every student has to take, regardless of their major or particular course of study. They will vary from school to school, but often, general education courses are in the same broad major subjects that you studied in high school—English, Math, Science, etc.
Courses required for your degree program	These are courses that are required to complete your chosen degree program; for instance, if you are pursuing a degree in philosophy, you might have to take PHIL 3200: The Enlightenment.
Elective courses	These are courses that you take simply because you want to, not because you are required to. They are called elective courses because you elect to take them. For instance, if you are a computer science major but you have room in your schedule and you are really interested in that philosophy course on The Enlightenment, it would be an elective course for you.

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE ENROLLING



DOES IT **INTEREST** YOU?



Ideally, the answer to this question should be "yes!"



WILL IT FIT WITH YOUR **SCHEDULE**?



Check your schedule to make sure you can be present for classes.



WILL IT HELP YOU **GRADUATE** ON TIME?



Check the number of credits for the class and the credit requirements for completing your program.



IS IT A **REQUIREMENT** FOR YOUR DEGREE OR PROGRAM?



Make the requirements for your degree or program a priority over others.



CAN YOU HANDLE THE **WORKLOAD**?



If you have doubts, it may be worth the effort to track down the syllabus.

2. The Role of an Academic Advisor

If the process of choosing the right courses and understanding the courses you need to take seems daunting or overwhelming, there is no reason to panic.

There are professionals whose job is to help you with these kinds of issues. They are typically called **academic advisors**, and their role at an institution of higher learning is to consult with students in order to help them develop short and long-term plans and goals.

An advisor will know about or be able to find out about different sets of requirements for the programs you are interested in and registration procedures. They may also have information and advice about particular courses or instructors, and they will have valuable experience working with students in your situation.



HINT

Advisors can be a great resource for a student looking for help with selecting a course, so don't hesitate to seek their assistance.



TERM TO KNOW

Academic Advisor

A person who works at your school that is responsible for helping you navigate course selection, choose your major and minor, and understand the requirements for your desired degree or program. They do not make these decisions for you, but they will provide suggestions. Academic advisors can be helpful when there is uncertainty about how to proceed with achieving your educational and career goals.

3. Researching Basic Course Information

After you've read a course description and carefully considered factors like whether a course fits into your schedule or whether it will be useful in satisfying the requirements of your degree, there is even more you can do to learn about a course in order to help you make your decision.

You might see if you can find a syllabus online from when the course was offered in the past, so you can investigate the workload and the kind of work that is assigned in the course.

Another good idea is to find out as much as you can about the instructor since they will play a significant part in whether you have a positive experience with the course. The instructor might have a web page, either through their academic department or elsewhere, which includes vital personal and professional details about them. There are also internet sites where students anonymously review their instructors; though another student's experience won't necessarily match up with yours, these sites can be an interesting way to gauge popular opinion about an instructor.



SUMMARY

There are many **types of courses**, such as **general education**, **required**, and **elective** courses that you can select. Your **academic advisor** can be of assistance when choosing courses. You should **research basic course information**, as well as consider your interests, experience, and if the courses will help you achieve your academic goals and graduate on time.



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