

# *The Academic Program*

Since 1914, the Pomona College gates have borne two inscriptions—exhortations from the College’s fourth president, James A. Blaisdell—that remain as relevant to the academic enterprise of the College today as they were when they were carved into stone almost a century ago.

The first inscription—Let only the eager, thoughtful and reverent enter here—speaks to the special character of the students and faculty brought together in this place. Pomona aims to be a community of scholars who are eager to learn and act in the world, thoughtful and critical about what they learn, principled about what they do and respectful of the earth and those who inhabit it with them.

The second inscription—They only are loyal to this college who, departing, bear their added riches in trust for mankind—speaks to the purpose of a Pomona education. The College seeks not only to enrich the lives of its students, but also to empower them to use their “added riches” of knowledge, ability and character in ways and for purposes that serve the interests of humankind.

True to both inscriptions, Pomona’s academic program is designed to engage bright, motivated students through a variety of disciplines, methodologies and outlooks; to help them build a strong base of knowledge and critical skills through the study of the liberal arts; to equip them as lifelong learners; and to forge in them the intellectual resilience to deal successfully with a world that is constantly changing. As the culmination of that experience, Pomona aims to give each of its graduates the foundation upon which to build an accomplished career and a rich, meaningful life. Beyond this, Pomona also strives to send forth graduates who are eager to contribute to their communities, willing to challenge the status quo, and thoughtful about why and how they do so.



## **THE CURRICULUM**

Reflecting the principle that a liberal arts education should be both broad and deep, as well as responsive to student interests, Pomona’s curriculum comprises three important components. First, the General Education Program provides a broad and flexible foundation for every Pomona student. Second, the major field of study ensures that every student explores at least one discipline in sufficient depth to understand its methodologies and opportunities. And finally, elective courses permit students to follow their own curiosity wherever it may lead them. Each student’s individual program is chosen in consultation with an academic adviser and informed by a broad array of advising resources.

General Education begins with the Critical Inquiry seminar for first-year students and continues with requirements for breadth of study, foreign language and physical education.

Required for all first-year students, the Critical Inquiry seminar introduces students to our highest educational beliefs: that established truths and theories should be interrogated and that students should develop their skills

in thoughtful reading, logical reasoning and graceful writing. Bridging the traditional boundaries of academic disciplines to focus on such special topics as “American Inequality,” “Cultural Psychology,” “Muslim Literary Landscapes,” and “Witchcraft in Early American Society,” each Critical Inquiry seminar includes no more than 15 students and is taught by a Pomona College faculty member.

The Breadth of Study Requirements are designed to encourage exploration while providing significant freedom of choice. Students take at least one course in each of five areas: Creative Expression; Social Institutions and Human Behavior; History, Values, Ethics and Cultural Studies; Physical and Biological Sciences; and Mathematical Reasoning. In consultation with their advisers, students are free to make their own selections, based upon their interests and curiosities, but they are also encouraged to choose courses that will prove challenging and thought-provoking. Because the system enables students to pursue questions of personal interest from a variety of disciplinary and theoretical frameworks, it also frees them to follow extended paths of inquiry that a more restrictive general education program might not permit.

In spring 2006, the faculty of the College endorsed a new component to its General Education Program dealing with the study of the Dynamics of Difference and Power. Enrollment in a DDP course is not a requirement but an aspiration that all students are urged to fulfill. A DDP course is one that uses class, ethnicity, gender, race, religion and/or sexuality as categories of analysis and that examines power at the interpersonal, local, national and/or international levels. (A list of DDP courses offered this academic year is located at <http://www.pomona.edu/administration/registrar>.)

If the principal purpose of General Education is to broaden the focus of a Pomona education, the purpose of the major, by contrast, is to require students to delve deeply into a chosen field. With 45 majors to choose from, some Pomona students opt for traditional disciplines—biology, English, history, economics—while others elect one of an expansive array of interdisciplinary majors, including regional and cultural studies as well as such emerging fields as environmental analysis, neuroscience and media studies. Whatever their major, students work closely with the faculty in their chosen field and ultimately complete a senior capstone exercise, usually including a seminar and a thesis or other senior project.

Broad, deep and rich, Pomona’s curriculum is complemented by the curricula of the four other undergraduate and two graduate institutions of The Claremont Colleges. Students may register for courses at any one of these other schools, expanding their options and the faculty expertise available to them.



## THE FACULTY

Like their students, Pomona faculty are diverse in background and scholarly interests. All are committed teachers of undergraduates. They frequently experiment with new approaches and materials, tailoring instruction to the changing world beyond their classrooms or laboratories. Astronomy instructors and students may stargaze from the College's one-meter telescope on nearby Table Mountain, for example, while those in archaeology may investigate prehistoric sites on the Santa Barbara Channel Islands. A ratio of eight students to each faculty member allows for small classes, including many seminars centered on intensive discussion, as well as student-teacher teamwork.

Pomona faculty are not only devoted teachers but also engaged scholars who conduct research comparable in quality to that of their peers at major universities and who often bring that research directly into the classroom. Unlike large universities, where faculty work primarily with graduate students, Pomona encourages instructors to collaborate with undergraduates on research in the library, archives, laboratory or field. External and internal grants support this hands-on experience as a complement to classroom instruction and as preparation for graduate or professional work.

## SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to courses, Pomona's academic program encompasses a wealth of special opportunities:

*Study Abroad*—The College offers 50 programs in 31 countries, ranging from Athens to Taipei, and more than half of all students spend at least a semester overseas.

*Oldenborg Center*—A residence hall with language-oriented living areas and lunch tables, Oldenborg promotes the study of foreign languages and cultures outside the classroom.

*College Writing*—The College Writing Program offers resources to help faculty and students create vibrant communities of readers and writers across campus—on paper, in classrooms, dorms and dining halls—and beyond.

*Field trips*—As part of a number of classes, students join faculty for field trips to Southern California mountains, deserts and cities.

*Athletics*—Students may play intercollegiate, intramural or club sports and take physical activity courses designed around student interests, such as ballroom dance, Pilates and yoga.

*Academic institutes*—The Pacific Basin Institute and the Hart Institute for American History offer publications, conferences and other intellectual resources.

*On-campus events*—All departments bring scholars from off campus to give special lectures and artistic performances.

“The center of a college,” wrote James A. Blaisdell, Pomona's fourth president, “is in great conversation, and out of the talk of college life springs everything else.” Today, Pomona remains committed to the ideal of the residential college, where classroom conversations can be rejoined over dinner, in a dormitory, or while strolling across campus, and where students are challenged daily to express themselves both in and out of class. By encouraging interaction among members of the College community, Pomona College seeks to locate the ongoing exchange of ideas at the heart of its educational mission.