

Students within the School of General Studies must formally declare a major before reaching 90 credits. Ideally you should make your choice after completing 45 credits of coursework toward the degree, or after completing 72 credits, if you brought 60 credits in transfer to GS. Before declaring your major you should read the sections in the *GS Bulletin* on “The Major” and “Concentrations” to familiarize yourself with choices and policies relevant to these academic opportunities.

Are you ready and eligible to declare a major? You are if

- You have completed at least one semester and a minimum of 12 letter-graded credits at GS;
- You have completed at least 45 credits toward your GS degree (including transfer credit);
- You are making regular and satisfactory progress toward fulfilling your GS core requirements;
- You have looked over the requirements for the major(s) in the GS on-line Bulletin and department websites and have narrowed your choices for a major.

How do I find out about majors and their requirements?

- Consult the *GS Online Bulletin* at www.gs.columbia.edu for information about specific majors and their requirements. From there you may link to department websites to learn more.
- Go to a department open house to find out more about the major and to meet faculty and other students in that major. These are usually held in the spring term and are publicized through the Dean of Students News, Dean's Notes, and the GS website.
- Go by the department office to find out if there are informational handouts for potential majors.

Can I take courses that may count toward my major prior to declaring the major?

In sampling courses across the curriculum, many students end up taking courses that will count toward their major prior to actually declaring the major. This is usually not a problem and it is a good way to get an introduction to a major and to get a head start on your major prior to declaring. However, students should be aware of the following:

- Most departments do not allow you to count toward the major or concentration courses in which you earned a “D” or a “P”. (Exceptions are noted in departmental guidelines for the major.)
- Some Columbia departments have restrictions on the number or kind of Barnard courses that will count toward the Columbia major or concentration.
- Some departments, like Economics, will not count courses taken out of sequence.
- When in doubt, check the department website.

How do I declare a major?

Online major declaration occurs during the months of March and October (notifications will be posted on Dean of Students News, Dean's Notes, and the GS website). If you wish to speak with an advisor before declaring, call 212-854-2881 or stop by 403 Lewisohn. Make sure you let the administrative assistant know that you want a “Major Declaration Appointment” with your advisor. Major declaration appointments should be scheduled for late September, October, late February, or March. Some majors require that you apply to the department for the major; for those majors, GS advisors cannot approve your major declaration until you have received the approval of the department or program.

The following majors are among those that require approval of the Director of Undergraduate Studies for the major, and you will receive instructions on how to obtain this permission once you declare your major online:

Architecture – 310 Barnard Hall
 Biological Sciences – A-L: 744 Fairchild Ext; M-Z: 716 Fairchild
 Chemistry - 340 Havemeyer
 Center for Comparative Literature & Society – Heyman Center
 Creative Writing – 612 Lewisohn
 Dance –Barnard Annex Room 202A

Italian – 502 Hamilton Hall
 Mathematics – 410 Math
 Middle East/Asian Languages & Cultures – 602 Kent Hall
 Physics – 702 Pupin Hall

What if I cannot decide among several different options?

Use your advising appointment with your GS advisor to discuss your interests and your options. Your advisor can help you think about the important questions to consider when choosing a major. Also, consider visiting the departments that you are interested in for a major: review their undergraduate handbook (several departments have these), meet with the Director of Undergraduate Studies or another faculty member in the department, and look at the department websites. Many departments and programs host open houses for potential majors during February and March: watch for announcements on the GS DOS News email about these or contact a department directly to find out if an open house is scheduled.

What if I am interested in a concentration?

All GS students must complete a major in order to graduate from GS. Concentrations are optional. You do need to declare a concentration if you plan to pursue one. You can do this in the same appointment as the major declaration. Remember, there is no overlap allowed between major and concentration requirements, and concentration and GS Core requirements, unless you are completing a premedical concentration. Students who want to declare a concentration should do so before completing 80 credits of coursework toward the degree. You must have declared a major before declaring a concentration. In some cases, students who have attempted a double-major choose, later in the process, to change the second major to a concentration.

What if I want to double-major?

If you are interested in double-majoring, discuss the viability of this with your GS advisor. Consider doing a concentration in one area and a major in the other. Look at all the various options. If you are interested in double-majoring, you normally must declare both majors before you complete 75 points toward your degree; exceptions to this rule may be made if the student has already made significant progress toward major completion prior to the formal declaration.

What happens if I do not declare a major?

Students who do not declare their major by the time they have earned 90 points toward the degree are subject to academic warning or probation.

What if I want to change my major or concentration after I have declared a different one?

Schedule an appointment with your GS advisor to discuss why you want to change your major as well as the new major you are considering. You and your advisor will then complete the necessary paperwork for deleting an old major and declaring a new one, as this cannot be done online. Students normally are not permitted to declare a new major after earning more than 90 credits toward the degree, but for compelling reasons exceptions can be made. Students should follow a similar process for changing or dropping a concentration.

Can any of my transfer credits count toward my major?

- Students must petition for transfer credits to count toward the major in the same semester in which the major is declared. Students who miss this deadline will not be able to petition for transfer credits toward the major.
- Each department has the discretion to count up to 12 credits in transfer toward the major; some departments have a lower limit and count less. Just because GS has approved transfer credit toward the degree does not mean that this credit automatically counts toward the major.
- At least 18 credits toward the major must be taken at Columbia.
- Students should consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies about which transfer courses may count toward the major and satisfy existing departmental requirements.
- Directors of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) usually require transcripts and syllabi to make decisions about whether transfer credits will count toward the major. Once a student has declared the major, the GS Dean of Students Office sends the DUS copies of the all relevant transcripts on file with GS.

Can courses taken as part of study abroad count toward the major?

Students who are approved for study abroad by GS must receive approval from their major department for any courses taken abroad that are to count toward the major.

Can summer term courses count toward the major?

Students need to make sure that summer term courses at Columbia will count toward the major. This permission comes from the department, not your GS advisor.

Can I count the same course toward a major and a concentration, or toward a major and GS core requirements?

- Double majors cannot count the same course toward both majors.
- Students cannot have any course double-count toward the major and the concentration.
- Students are allowed an overlap of two courses between the major and GS core requirements. This two-course limit holds for double majors as well.
- No overlap is allowed between courses counted toward core requirements and a concentration, with the exception of students undertaking the premed concentration.

Any exemptions to the above rules are clearly articulated in the GS Bulletin or on departmental websites.

What if I want to create my own major?

The Special Major option is reserved for students whose academic interests cannot be accommodated by one of the more than fifty existing undergraduate programs at Columbia. A special major must be proposed before a student has completed 80 credits toward the degree and is restricted to students with a minimum GPA of 3.5. Students should discuss their rationale, eligibility, and proposed program with their GS advisor as well as with a faculty member(s) in relevant departments before proceeding. If a student's proposal seems reasonable, the advisor will instruct the student to submit a formal Special Major application to the Dean of Students, who will advise the student on developing the proposal further before it is submitted to the GS Committee on Academic Affairs, who will review the proposal prior to bringing it to the Committee on Instruction for approval. Note that Special Majors are not eligible for departmental honors.