

## KILACHAND HONORS COLLEGE

### Introduction

The Kilachand Honors College is a university-wide community of faculty and students dedicated to preserving, renewing, and rethinking classic ideals of liberal education: love of learning, intellectual curiosity, self-discovery, empathy, clarity of thought and expression. It rests on three pillars: an integrated, four-year curriculum; an extensive series of co-curricular events that include site-visits to leading cultural institutions as well as talks and readings by leading figures in the arts, sciences, and professions; and, finally, a “living and learning” community that offers students the personal atmosphere of a small liberal college and fosters responsibility and citizenship.

The Kilachand curriculum has several keynotes: First, it attempts to integrate the arts, sciences, and professions and attempts to lower the barriers between “pure” and “applied” knowledge while avoiding an instrumental, utilitarian approach. Second, the curriculum explores the commonalities and differences of various disciplines’ ways of knowing by looking at specific problems in a wide range of fields. Third, the curriculum tries to connect teaching with research and creative activity by introducing students to their professors’ work and gradually preparing them to do research and creative activity of their own. Finally, the curriculum pays close attention to ethical, aesthetic, and social issues in order to foster self-development and citizenship.

### Curriculum

The curricular sequence (32 total credits) is as follows:

First year: Students take seminars (fall and spring) that entail intensive exploration of specific problems and themes in different fields. They also take a studio course, “Modernity and its Discontents,” which attempts to sharpen their writing, oral, research, and quantitative skills. The studios do so in large part by exploring fundamental ethical, aesthetic, and social issues posed by classic modernist texts in fields including literature, fine art, philosophy, psychology, and film. (12 credits)

Second year: Students take a two-semester sequence, “The Nature of Inquiry,” that examines how we investigate nature, art, society and their interconnections. It does so by examining and juxtaposing the practices of three disciplines per semester. The fields in question may vary, but they are chosen to ensure intellectual breadth. (This year students look at history, natural science, and classics in the fall and music, biomedical engineering, and public health in the spring). Throughout the course, we consider fundamental ethical, social, and aesthetic issues posed by the relationship of human beings to each other, nature, and works of art. The central concern in this class is to understand how and why people make decisions in complex circumstances; how they take or fail to take responsibility for their outcomes; and how they respond when gross mistakes are made by others or indeed by themselves. (8 credits)

Third year: Students take a one-semester course aimed at helping them design the research/creative project that they will undertake in their senior year. The course is structured around three basic activities: individual and group analysis of innovative research drawn from a variety of intellectual disciplines; individual writing aimed at fostering intellectual discovery, methodological rigor, and project design; and group activities aimed at honing project design and presentation skills. Focusing on specific case studies, students explore the structure of the discovery process, including how researchers embed imaginative questions in viable research projects and balance creative ambition with intellectual modesty. After breaking into smaller groups so that students can work on developing their research agendas and honing their presentation skills, students present their keystone project to their peers. (4 credits)

Fourth year: The culmination of the curriculum is a two-semester sequence that provides students with a framework for understanding innovation and its impact, while working on their keystone projects in close conjunction with their faculty advisors. The keystone project is a substantial, in-depth work of research, creation, or invention and should be equivalent to an honors thesis. Its form may vary from field to field, but it should aim for the highest standards of the disciplinary or interdisciplinary area in question.

The fall course examines how innovation takes place at different historical junctures and in different spheres of activity (including literature and the arts, science, technology, and business). It considers the factors that impede or encourage innovation and explores its social and cultural impact and costs. While students consider these issues, they work intensively on their keystone projects with their faculty advisors. They report on their work (and the problems they encounter in carrying it out) at three mini-conferences during the semester. These occasions give them the opportunity to explain their work to their peers in different fields and to learn about their peers' projects. During the spring semester, students focus on completing their keystone projects. They also plan and carry out a conference to showcase their work. (8 credits)