

Radically Free

Radically Responsible

TEN STRANDS

An Integrated
Liberal Arts Education

DHARMA REALM

BUDDHIST
UNIVERSITY



WHAT IS A LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION?

The liberal arts tradition upholds a broad education in the arts and sciences, in contrast with an education whose aim is vocational or professional in nature. The liberal arts encourages sharp analysis, sound judgment, and informed choices—essential qualities for becoming active, reflective, and responsible citizens of the world. Liberally educated persons are able to appreciate the unifying and complementary nature of the sciences, arts, and humanities across disciplines and cultures. They can effectively integrate the intellectual, ethical, personal, and professional dimensions of their lives into a meaningful whole.



WHAT ARE THE TEN STRANDS?

The DRBU BA program offers a curriculum that weaves together the following distinct strands: Buddhist Classics, Western Classics, Chinese Classics, Indian Classics, Language, Mathematics, Natural Science, Rhetoric and Writing, and Music, as well as a Capstone class. The core curriculum consists of primary texts—Buddhist, Western, Indian, and Chinese—studied and discussed in a seminar setting.

Students are encouraged to view their studies in these strands, not as isolated from one another, but interwoven, each one offering a different approach to the foundational questions that contribute to a liberally educated person. The term “strand” emphasizes this interconnectedness, as it implies the integration of several distinct elements into a larger, more complex whole.



Buddhist Classics

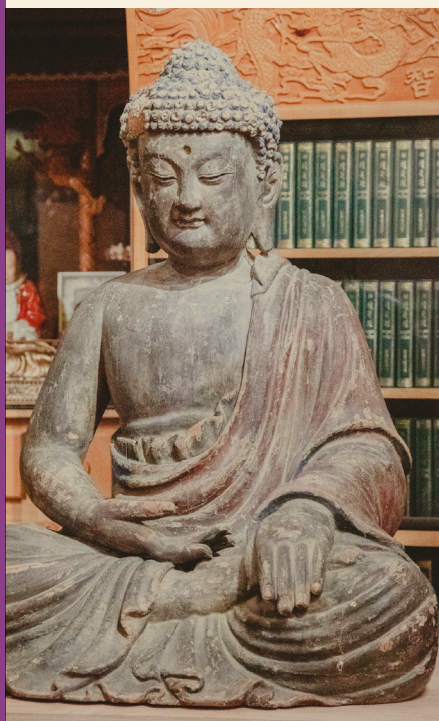
On the eve of his passing, the Buddha instructed his students to take as their teacher, not an individual, but the teachings themselves, the philosophy and practices that lead to self-knowledge and a clear understanding of the nature of reality. The Buddha once compared these teachings to a vast ocean: “Just as the great ocean has one taste, the taste of salt, so also this *Dharma* and *Vinaya* has one taste, the taste of liberation.”

In this strand, the emphasis is placed on studying Buddhism not merely as an historical event, but as a living philosophy and embodied discipline. The texts are approached and understood not as a repository of answers but as a means of uncovering questions: How does each individual construct a world of meaning, and how can that world be transformed and deepened into a site of liberation? The freeing up and broadening of the human spirit to pursue such questions was the original intent of the Buddhist Classics and the continuing purpose for studying them now.

SELECTION OF WORKS

EXPLORED:

- *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Majjhima Nikaya*, *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, and *Khuddaka Nikāya*
- *Heart Sūtra*
- *Lotus Sūtra*
- *Vajra Sūtra*
- *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*
- *Visuddhimagga*



Western Classics



The Western traditions are at the heart of many important political, economic, and social transformations that have helped create the modern world. To understand these important influences is essential to any liberal arts education. Through exposure to philosophy and literature, the student is empowered to understand the frames of reference and paradigms that shape their interpretive faculties. They are also better equipped to understand their own reactions to circumstances at play: an interplay of the personal, natural, and social worlds.

The major focus of the Western Classics strand is to take the student through a personal encounter with seminal thinkers through the use of primary texts as sources of inquiry and insight. From a Western perspective, this means establishing grounds of authority for truth and knowledge. The pursuit of truth in the West is one of the most emphasized foci in this tradition. Understanding the development of knowledge over time with philosophers and thinkers in dialogue with each other and building on the foundations that precede them, will enable the student to identify the dialectical nature and evolution of Western thought.

SELECTION OF WORKS AND AUTHORS EXPLORED:

- Jane Austen
- Dante
- Descartes
- Emily Dickinson
- Dostoevsky
- *Epic of Gilgamesh*
- Freud
- Goethe
- Heidegger
- Homer
- *New Testament*
- Shakespeare

Chinese Classics

As one of the oldest civilizations in the world, China's long-standing tradition of classical literature confronts issues of universal human concern: What does it mean to live a good life? What are the virtues? How can we achieve personal transformation? How should we relate to other people as well as to the natural world? How should we face death?

Chinese Classics invites students to explore China's formative thinkers and dominant modes of thought through the exploration of significant philosophical, literary, and aesthetic works. Students will be introduced to a wide repertoire of literary genres as they progress through the strand: poetry, essays, philosophical works, historical writing, hagiography, short stories, novels, as well as ritual and divinatory texts. Through reading these foundational texts, students witness the development of Chinese thought over time and experience firsthand the dialogues and debates between different texts and thinkers.

SELECTION OF WORKS AND AUTHORS EXPLORED:

- Confucius
- *The Daodejing*
- *The Daxue (Great Learning)*
- *The Xiaojing (Classic on Family Reverence)*
- *The Yijing (Book of Changes)*
- *Zhongyong (Doctrine of the Mean)*
- *Zhuangzi*



Indian Classics

India is home to one of the earliest records of human wisdom, meticulously preserved and passed down orally for thousands of years before being committed to writing. The Vedas, meaning “knowledge,” document the insight of the ancient *ṛṣis*, those who could directly see reality for what it is. The Vedic corpus has long been venerated for the probing vision of these ancient seers, and yet the exposition of Indian wisdom has evolved over time in response to changing historical and cultural conditions as well as human receptivity. As a result, Indian classical texts present a rich compendium of approaches to the age-old questions of what it means to be human and to live a fulfilled life in society.

Through close reading of primary texts, students will consider issues fundamental to Indian systems of thought. For example, what is the influence of past karmic tendencies [*saṃskāras*] on the experience of the present moment? What is the relationship between language and reality? What kind of behavior is socially responsible? Students will read Indian insights into causation, human nature, and the goals of human life [*puruṣārtha*]. They will explore South Asian perspectives on religious thought and practice, the structure of the human mind and perception, paths to liberation, and limitations to infinite freedom. Through their engagement with the texts, students will grapple with the perennial riddles of existence and human potential.

SELECTION OF WORKS

EXPLORED:

- *Bhagavad Gita*
- *The Mahābhārata*
- *The Rāmāyaṇa* by Vālmiki
- *Ṛgveda*
- *Sāṃkhyakārikā* by Īśvarakṛṣṇa
- *Upaniṣads*
- *Yogasūtra* by Patañjali



Language

The Language strand provides the opportunity for students to examine classical Chinese and Sanskrit source texts in their original languages. Language Tutorials are designed to equip students with tools that aid in interpreting primary texts and in better understanding how languages work in general. Students venture to learn language skills sufficiently well to approach selected texts in the original; mastery is not the goal. Through the process of reading, translating, and analyzing passages from these texts, and with the guidance and assistance of the instructor, students can more closely appreciate the nuances of meaning and style in these works. Translating from a classical language to the student's modern language affords a deeper appreciation of how different languages work to solve common communication challenges.

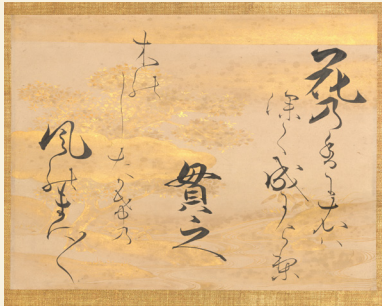
SELECTION OF WORKS AND AUTHORS EXPLORED:

Sanskrit

- *Amitabha Sūtra*
- *Heart Sūtra*
- *Rāmāyaṇa*
- *Upaniṣads*
- *Vedas*

Chinese

- Confucius
- *Heart Sūtra*
- Lao Tzu
- Mencius





Natural Science

Science is one of humankind's most ambitious attempts to explore and experience the beauties and mysteries of the universe. The focus of scientific explorations, their methods of inquiry, and the intriguing stories behind the scientists' journeys of discovery are woven into DRBU's Natural Science strand. Through reading primary sources and replicating classical experiments, students are introduced to the revolutionary and paradigm-changing discoveries that chronicle the history of science and fundamentally alter the way we view ourselves and the world, both in the past and present.

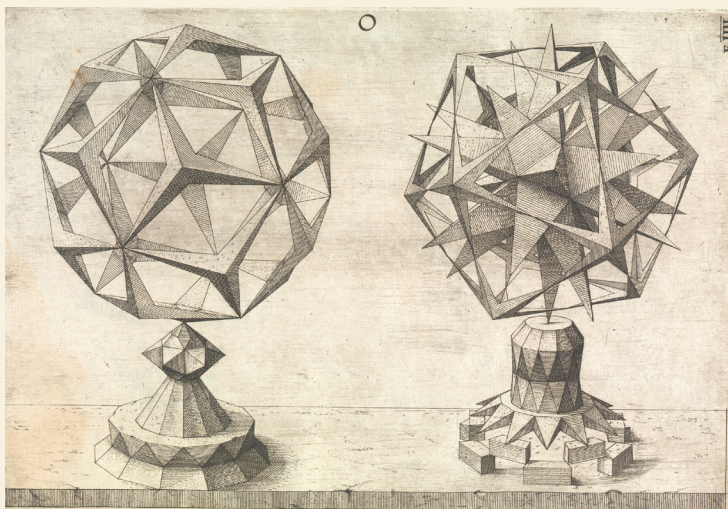
SELECTION OF WORKS

EXPLORED:

- *Experiments in Plant Hybridization* by Mendel
- *On the Equilibrium of Liquids, On the Weight of the Mass of the Air* by Pascal
- *Origin of Species* by Darwin
- *Parts of Animals, Physics* by Aristotle
- *Relativity* by Einstein
- *Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism* by Maxwell
- *Two New Sciences* by Galileo



Mathematics



Mathematics encompasses an area of human endeavor that aids our grasp, construction, and conveyance of notions such as quantity, ratio, change, measure, value, and space and time—all basic and integral to the human experience. Therefore, at DRBU, students study mathematics as part of an integrated liberal arts curriculum and not as a separate specialty. The main activities of the Mathematics strand—reading the primary texts, performing demonstrations, and engaging in discussions around the materials—develop in students the propensity to raise and ponder important questions and provide them with the learning tools to explore and address those questions.

SELECTION OF WORKS EXPLORED:

- *Elements* by Euclid
- *Geometry* by Descartes
- *Generation of Conic Sections* by Pascal
- *Principia Mathematica* by Newton





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Music

Musicality, developed through musical training, consists of skills, sensibilities, and knowledge used to understand, reflect upon, and respond to musical content and context. While a sense of the significance of music is universal among cultures, approaches to understanding this significance are as diverse as the musical traditions themselves. Students in DRBU's Music strand draw from these different approaches, integrating them with an embodied engagement in order to explore and develop their own musicality.



SELECTION OF WORKS

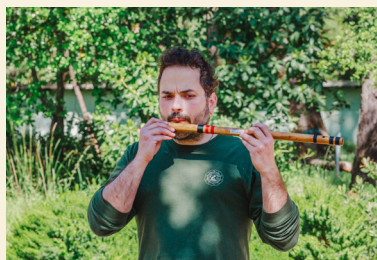
EXPLORED:

Books

- *Treatise on Performing Arts* by Bharatamuni
- *The Classic of Rites* by Confucius
- *Manual of Harmonics* by Nicomachus
- *Treatise on Harmony* by Rameau

Music

- *The Vedas, The Koran, Gregorian Mass, Metta Sutta, Lotus Sūtra*
- *Traditional, The Great Ambush*
- *Shankar, An Introduction to Indian Music*
- *Traditional, Gending Bortang Babar Layar*
- *Traditional, Dikobo Damu Da Sombe*
- *Bach, Fugue in C-Sharp Minor*
- *Mozart, The Magic Flute*
- *Beethoven, Symphony No. 9 in D Minor*
- *Smetana, Ma Vlast*



Rhetoric and Writing



A foundational principle in the liberal arts is that thinking, reading, and writing are interdependent activities. The ability to write is viewed not merely as a skill, but is considered integral to the ability to think clearly and critically. Students are asked to both read and write consistently throughout their four years at DRBU. Done honestly and thoughtfully, writing in the program serves as a tool for deep transformation that can help shape one's intellectual and ethical life. Writing and rhetoric are practices that allow us to raise important questions, challenge our own assumptions, and develop

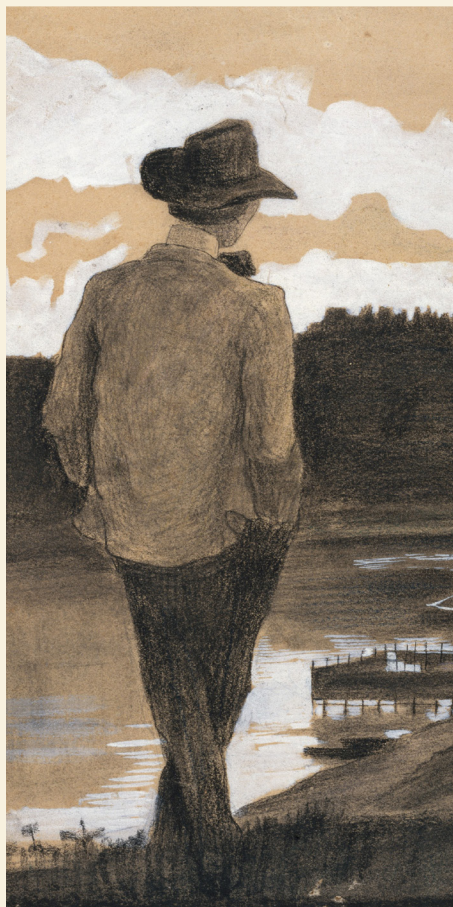
self-awareness, all while simultaneously spurring similar benefits for others. The aim of this course is to equip students to become clearer thinkers, better readers, and more convincing writers and speakers. These skills support success at DRBU and beyond.

SELECTION OF AUTHORS EXPLORED:

- James Baldwin
- Luce Irigaray
- Toni Morrison
- Nietzsche
- Plato

Capstone

The senior Capstone Seminar gives students an opportunity to pursue an idea either more broadly or more in-depth. This experience entails pulling together the knowledge, skills, and interests they have developed from all facets of their education at DRBU into a culminating learning experience. The form of the seminar, dependent on student interests and faculty guidance, might aim to integrate their broad liberal arts learning by working on a theme across multiple strands or allow an in-depth focus on a single overarching idea, work, or theme. Thus, the Capstone may highlight a particular author by delving deeply into one or two works, or it may take a single issue and examine it from and through multiple perspectives.



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