Bachelor of Liberal Arts at the Patuxent Institution

The College of Arts & Sciences offers a program leading to a Bachelor of Liberal Arts (BLA) degree to incarcerated students at the Patuxent Institution, a prison in Jessup, Maryland.

The program is administered jointly by the College (http://college.georgetown.edu/) and the Prisons and Justice Initiative (http://prisonsandjustice.georgetown.edu/) (PJI). PJI was founded in 2016 in order to address the national crisis of mass incarceration, one of the most urgent moral and political issues of our time. In addition to an extensive series of academic and policy events, PJI offers a series of innovative courses to Georgetown undergraduates, including one (Making an Exoneree) that involves direct advocacy on behalf of wrongfully convicted people. PJI has also developed several programs serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people in the DC area, including both Georgetown credit-bearing courses for incarcerated students (the Prison Scholars Program at the DC Jail) and a certificate program in business and entrepreneurship for returning citizens (the Pivot Program, a collaboration with the McDonough School of Business (https://msb.georgetown.edu/)). In all of its programming, PJI works to better understand the causes and consequences of the mass incarceration crisis, contribute to bipartisan solutions for effective reform, and improve the lives of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people in the DC area and beyond. The BLA program is a significant expansion of the Prison Scholars Program, with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, several generous donors, and the entire Georgetown community.

The BLA takes the undergraduate degrees offered on the main campus as a model and point of departure, drawing on the strengths of the College curriculum and the rich history of the liberal arts in the Jesuit tradition in order to deliver a transformative educational experience to highly motivated incarcerated students. The program exposes students to the full breadth of the liberal arts by preserving the structure of the main campus (University and College) core requirements. It shifts to innovative interdisciplinary major courses of study, however, both out of necessity, given the smaller scale of the program, but also out of a desire to offer students enhanced opportunities for integration. The major tracks in the BLA program combine existing programs in the humanities and social sciences into two integrative, interdisciplinary clusters: the first in the Cultural Humanities, drawing from programs in Art and Art History, English, the programs housed in Performing Arts, and affiliated LCL and interdisciplinary programs, and the second in Interdisciplinary Social Science, drawing from Anthropology, Economics, Government, Linguistics, Psychology, and Sociology, as well as affiliated interdisciplinary programs in the College. Students in the BLA program will also have access to a full range of academic and support services, delivered through collaborative partnerships between dedicated BLA administrative staff and partners on the main campus.

Academic Policies

Many of the following academic policies and regulations are based on those for undergraduate students on the main campus (https://bulletin.georgetown.edu/academics/undergraduate-regulations/), but modified as necessary to acknowledge the unique circumstances of incarcerated students.

Admissions

Applications for admission to the BLA program are welcomed from those incarcerated in any Maryland state correctional facility, regardless of offense, sentence length, or age. Applicants must have obtained a high school diploma or (GED) equivalent in order to be eligible; no standardized tests are required.

All applicants will be required to submit an initial application, including an academic assessment and essay responses. Finalists for admission will move to an interview stage. The admissions committee seeks candidates with extraordinary intellectual promise, leadership potential, and a demonstrated desire to serve their communities.

Those admitted to the program will be transferred to the Patuxent Institution prior to matriculation.

Tuition and Financial Assistance

Tuition Charges for the BLA Program

- per semester (full-time): $4986
- per credit (part-time, below 8 credits; or overload, above 12): $517.50

Financial Assistance

Because Georgetown University's BLA Program has been designated a Prison Education Program (https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/topics/prison-education-programs), students in the BLA program will be eligible to receive Pell grant funding and apply that to the cost of participation in the BLA program. The BLA administrative staff will assist all admitted students with FAFSA paperwork, issues related to Pell eligibility, and any other questions regarding their eligibility for financial aid. As an institution that meets full financial need, we expect that the total aid offered, including Pell funding, will cover the full tuition costs.

Academic Regulations

Matriculation

I. Course Load, Registration Status, and Progress to Degree

The BLA academic year consists of three terms (Fall, Spring, and Summer), and students in the BLA program are expected to be enrolled full-time across all three terms unless an exception is approved by a member of the BLA academic administrative staff. Full-time status is equivalent to two courses/8 credits per term. Anticipated time to degree is five years.

II. Course Withdrawal Policies and Procedures

Because students in the BLA program will not have regular access to Georgetown electronic systems, a request to withdraw from a course must be communicated to a member of the BLA academic administrative staff, ordinarily via paper form. If a student does not complete a course for which the student is registered and from which the student has not officially been withdrawn, a failure will be recorded for that course. The BLA academic administrative staff may also elect to have students withdrawn from a course when circumstances

related to their incarceration prevent them from attending class for an extended period of time or fulfilling their academic obligations. As in main campus programs, courses dropped through the add/drop period will not be recorded on the transcript; thereafter, courses are considered withdrawn, indicated by a mark of "W" on the transcript. The deadline to withdraw from a course will be the last day of classes each semester.

III. Leave of Absence Policy

As in main campus programs, BLA students in good standing may, ordinarily on formal written request, be granted a leave of absence. Prior to approval, students will be required to meet with a member of the BLA academic administrative staff to discuss the reasons for the leave, the goals for the time away from the program, and tentative plans for return. The BLA academic administrative staff may also elect to place students on a leave of absence in the event that circumstances related to their incarceration prevent them from fulfilling their academic obligations for an extended period of time.

IV. Withdrawal from the Program

As on the main campus, a withdrawal from the program and the University will usually be granted, ordinarily upon written request, to any student in good academic standing and not subject to disciplinary action. Prior to approval, the BLA academic administrative staff will make every effort to meet with the student to discuss the reasons for withdrawal and options for continued pursuit of academic goals, including potential transfer to another institution.

V. Degree Conferral

The University confers degrees three times a year: in May, August, and December. Ordinarily, degrees will be conferred at the completion of the fifth year of full-time study, in August, but degrees can be conferred in December or May for students who finish off sequence.

A commencement celebration will be held annually, recognizing all students who have completed the degree in the previous twelve months.

Studying, Grades, and Credits

I. Studying

The section on studying for main campus undergraduate programs (https://bulletin.georgetown.edu/academics/undergraduate-regulations/studying-grades-credit/) articulates the expectation that "Students should expect to study at least 30 hours per week outside of class (i.e., at least six hours per three credit course)." The BLA program carries the same expectation: students in the program will spend at least 30 hours outside of class time each week studying, preparing for class, and participating in the co-curricular life of the academic community.

II. Grades and Grade Point Average

The BLA program will adhere to regular University policy on grades (https://bulletin.georgetown.edu/academics/undergraduate-regulations/studying-grades-credit/) and employ the standard scale for calculation of Grade Point Average (https://bulletin.georgetown.edu/academics/undergraduate-regulations/studying-grades-credit/) (GPA).

III. Pass/Fail Policy

Students in the BLA program may elect to take one elective course each semester on a pass/fail basis in their fourth and fifth years of study, up to a maximum of six courses.

The procedure for selecting the pass/fail grade option is as follows:

- Students choose an elective course to be graded on a pass/fail basis during the add/drop period by submitting a pass/fail course request to a member of the BLA administrative staff. The instructor receives notification after the pass/fail request has been approved and processed.
- The pass/fail option is restricted to free electives and must be exercised only for courses within the normal course load for a given semester. A department, for valid reasons, may designate certain of its courses as unavailable to the pass/fail option. Language classes at the language-learning level and studio art courses may not be taken pass/fail.
- Pass/fail courses will be marked S (Satisfactory), equivalent to letter grades of C or better, or U (Unsatisfactory), equivalent to letter grades below C. Neither the S nor the U will affect the student's QPI, but only courses marked as "S" receive credit.
- Once a student has elected to take a course on a pass/fail basis, it is not possible, under any circumstances, to record a letter grade for that course.
- The last day to request the pass/fail option is the last day to add a course for that semester.

IV. Incompletes

Students are expected to complete all work in a course by the deadline(s) determined by the instructor, and no later than the end of the final exam period. In the event that a student is unable to meet the standard deadlines due to illness, an emergency, or unforeseen circumstances at the end of the term, the student may request a provisional grade of N ("incomplete"). All requests for N grades must be approved by both the instructor of record for the course and a member of the BLA academic administrative staff. No provisional grade except N may be given, and absent approval from both the instructor and the BLA academic administrative staff, the student will be assigned an administrative failure or a letter grade (A through F) on the basis of all work completed by the regular deadline.

When an N grade is granted, the course must be completed by the new deadlines agreed upon by the student, instructor, and the BLA academic administrative staff, and the final grade submitted by the instructor no later than (1) March 30 for the fall semester; (2) September 30 for the spring semester; or (3) November 30 for the summer sessions. If the student has not completed the outstanding work by the new deadline(s), faculty will be required to submit a letter grade (A through F) on the basis of all work completed previously.

V. Grade Reports

Because students in the BLA program will not have access to GU Experience, the BLA academic administrative staff will provide paper copies of grade reports after all grades for the previous semester have been recorded and posted. Students may also request unofficial or official transcripts through a member of the BLA academic administrative staff. The University will not issue a transcript that reflects less than the complete student record.

VI. Grade Changes

When a professor determines that a grade change is justified (e.g., due to an error in recording or calculation), the professor will submit a grade change request, including the reasons for such a change, to the BLA academic administrative staff for approval.

As a matter of equity, professors cannot change final grades on the basis of additional work from an individual student after grades have been submitted. This includes but is not limited to revision of papers, retakes of tests, or submission of supplemental work. Professors who are asked to reassess work by individual students should be prepared to reassess work of all other students in the class.

The BLA academic administrative staff is responsible for ensuring that grade changes are not processed later than one semester after a course has been offered. A grade for a fall semester course may be changed by the professor until the end of the spring semester; a spring semester course until the end of September; a summer course until the end of November.

VII. Grade Appeals

When a student thinks that a given course grade is not justified, the student must first discuss the grade on an informal basis with the professor of the course and/or a member of the BLA academic administrative staff. After having discussed the grade with the faculty member or a member of the academic administrative staff, the student may consider a formal appeal of the grade.

Grounds for appeal: An error in grading procedures or inequity in the application of policies stated in the course syllabus are grounds for an appeal. A disagreement with the professional judgment of the professor should not be the basis of an appeal or any resulting change of grade. The appeal process involves a thorough review, which could result in the decision that the grade was too low, or, if such an error or inequity was found to have benefitted the student, that the grade was too high.

Initiating an appeal: If the student believes that there is reason for an appeal of the professor's assigned grade, the student may make a formal written appeal to the BLA academic administrative staff. In the appeal letter, the student must state the grounds for the appeal and document any claims of grading error or inequities in as much detail as possible. The BLA academic administrative staff must then notify the faculty member of the appeal and provide a copy of the formal request. Such an appeal must be filed within the first thirty calendar days of the semester after that in which the grade was assigned.

Informal resolution of the appeal. The BLA academic administrative staff may try to resolve the appeal informally, but has no authority to change the grade assigned by the faculty member.

Resolution by faculty committee: If the BLA academic administrative staff is not able to resolve the appeal informally, then a committee of three impartial faculty members will review the complaint and decide the issue. After hearing from the faculty member and the student (or determining that they are unavailable), and taking whatever other steps it deems necessary, the appeals committee shall decide whether to sustain the original grade, raise it, or lower it. The committee's decision is final.

Transfer Credit

As in main campus programs, students are eligible to transfer up to 60 credits earned at a previous institution to the BLA degree. A minimum grade of "C" (or equivalent) is required in order for a course to be transferred. Courses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine whether they fulfill specific core or major requirements in the BLA program; as in main campus College programs, at least half of the coursework for the student's major must be done in residence in the BLA program.

Academic Standards

The following standards for successful academic progress are meant to mirror very closely those articulated by the College for its main campus undergraduate programs (new window). The BLA faculty and staff believe very deeply in the potential, intellectual and otherwise, of all students admitted to the program, and are committed to working with students to develop that potential. Students admitted to the BLA program are in turn expected, upon initiation into this intellectual community, to commit themselves to these high standards of academic performance and integrity, standards that establish the conditions for personal and intellectual formation. Failure to meet these standards may result in temporary or permanent separation from the BLA program.

A group of BLA faculty and academic administrative staff, known as the BLA Council on Studies, will meet at the conclusion of each semester to review the progress of each student in the BLA program. When a student's performance falls short of the standards of the community, the Council will consider that student's circumstances carefully, decide on the necessary course of action, and discuss this decision with the student. The Council may decide on one of three courses of action: probation/mandatory academic recovery plan, suspension, or dismissal.

Probation/Mandatory Academic Recovery Plan: If a student receives a failing grade in a single course or incurs a cumulative grade point average below 2.0, the student will be placed on academic probation and required to meet with a member of the BLA administrative staff to work collaboratively on an academic recovery plan. The purpose of the academic recovery plan is to identify both reasons for academic struggles and potential solutions that will allow for improved performance and a return to good academic standing, including additional tutoring or academic support services.

As on the main campus, students on probation are expected to pass all courses and earn a grade point average of at least 2.0 in the semester following imposition of probationary status. The BLA Council on Studies reserves the right to impose additional, higher standards for performance while on probation. Any student who fails to meet these conditions is eligible to be suspended or dismissed at the end of the following semester.

Note: Probationary status does not appear on the academic transcript.

Suspension or Dismissal: Students may be suspended (for one, two, or three semesters) or permanently dismissed from the program as a result of unsatisfactory academic performance. Students who fail a course while on probation or two courses in a single semester are eligible for suspension, and those who accumulate a total of three failures while enrolled in the BLA program are eligible to be dismissed. In addition, students may be suspended or dismissed if

their cumulative grade point averages fall below the following levels at the end of the academic year:

- First-year students: 1.0
- Second-year students: 1.33
- Third- and fourth-year students: 1.67

Please note: academic suspensions and dismissals are noted on transcripts.

Honor System

While not governed by the same Honor Council as undergraduates in main campus programs, students in the BLA program are nevertheless required to sign and affirm the same Honor Pledge and uphold the same Standards of Conduct as main campus undergraduates. A parallel BLA Honor Council, with policies and procedures that mirror very closely those outlined in the main campus Honor System Procedure, will govern the academic life of the BLA intellectual community.

Student Records

The BLA program will comply with and conform to all of the relevant policies outlined in the Bulletin section on Student Records (https://bulletin.georgetown.edu/academics/student-records/), with the one exception that student requests for (unofficial or official) transcripts will be made to a member of the BLA administrative staff, who can provide an unofficial copy and/or submit a request for an official copy to the University Registrar on their behalf.

Student Services

Academic Advising

All students in the BLA program will receive regular academic advising from the BLA administrative staff. Upon matriculation, students will receive a full orientation to the BLA program and the larger intellectual life and expectations of the University. In the first two years of the program, students will be invited to meet regularly with an assigned academic advisor to discuss their progress in the core curriculum and their developing intellectual interests. In the third year, students will be expected to meet with their advisor to declare one of the two interdisciplinary major programs, and in the fourth and fifth years students will enjoy the advising of both a member of the BLA administrative staff and a faculty director of their major program.

The BLA advising philosophy is informed by the Jesuit values (https://missionandministry.georgetown.edu/mission/spirit-of-georgetown/#_ga=2240641217314215122161705 4778-4609659861466124653) of *cura personalis* and Educating the Whole Person. As such, significant emphasis is placed on individualized attention to the needs of our students, attentive to their unique circumstances and concerns, and their particular gifts and limitations, to encourage each person's flourishing and the flourishing of the entire intellectual community.

Financial Aid Counseling

Because Georgetown University's BLA Program has been designated a Prison Education Program (https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/topics/prison-education-programs) by the U.S. Department of Education, students in the BLA program will be eligible to receive Pell grant funding and apply that to the cost of participation in the BLA program. The BLA administrative staff will assist all admitted students with FAFSA paperwork, issues related to Pell eligibility, and any other questions regarding their eligibility for financial aid and their ability to finance their education. Additional sources of tuition assistance are available to students who are not eligible for Pell funding.

In addition to counseling related to financial aid and educational costs, the BLA program will seek to provide students with comprehensive counseling related to financial literacy.

Academic Support Services

The BLA administrative staff will collaborate with the University's Academic Resource Center (https://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/#_ga=2110479559314215122161705 4778-4609659861466124653) to provide comparable disability and academic support services to students (https://bulletin.georgetown.edu/regulations/disabilities/) in the BLA program. The BLA staff will work with students as necessary to identify disabilities and provide appropriate accommodations for documented disabilities. As on the main campus, the BLA program will partner with the Academic Resource Center to offer students a wide range of academic support services, including academic and study skills workshops, individual consultations, and tutoring services. The BLA program will utilize a network of undergraduate and graduate student tutors who will travel regularly to Patuxent, and the Director of the BLA Writing Program will also oversee a dedicated writing center offering comprehensive writing support.

Library Services

The BLA program will utilize a network of main campus student research assistants who will serve as intermediaries and assist students in the BLA program with searches and research. Requested materials will be delivered on a regular basis to students at Patuxent, and BLA faculty and staff will, in collaboration with the main campus library staff, seek to provide BLA students not only with the materials that they need to conduct their academic work but also with an experience that approximates that of direct, unmediated academic research. The BLA program will also schedule occasional orientation and training sessions with professional library staff from the main campus, and the program is committed to identifying other innovative solutions that allow BLA students more direct, unmediated access to research materials, including the acquisition of databases for accessible via a secure, offline server at Patuxent.

Career Counseling

The BLA program will partner with colleagues in the Cawley Career Education Center (https://careercenter.georgetown.edu/) on the main campus to offer students in the BLA program comprehensive career counseling services. Our career counseling program emphasizes both early intervention, beginning with exercises in self-inventory and career exploration for students in the early years of the degree program, and targeted career placement services for program alumni approaching release. PJI places special emphasis on building a network of program alumni throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, connecting them to community partners and employers with a demonstrated commitment to employment and other opportunities for formerly incarcerated people.

Reentry Services

PJI has a dedicated Director of Reentry Services (DRS) on staff, and that person will be available to provide comprehensive reentry support to BLA program alumni as they (prepare to) return to their communities. The DRS will support returning citizens by helping them to identify relevant resources (housing, employment, mental

health services, nutrition, etc.) and navigate complicated bureaucratic processes, and will also collaborate with program alumni on individualized reentry plans that include both short- and longer-term goals for successful reintegration into the community. The DRS will also be responsible for maintaining an alumni network of returning citizens for mutual support and connecting the alumni network with outside agencies and employers who actively seek to support formerly incarcerated people as part of their mission.

Degree Requirements

The following are the graduation requirements for all students in the Bachelor of Liberal Arts program. Each degree candidate must:

1. Complete a minimum of 120 credits (N.B. The standard unit in the BLA program is the four-credit course rather than the three-credit course as on the main campus, and thus students will ordinarily need to complete 30 courses in order to reach the minimum of 120 credits).
2. Complete the BLA Core Curriculum.
3. Complete all requirements for one of the two interdisciplinary major programs. Ordinarily, students will be expected to declare a major during the third year of study.
4. Achieve a final cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or better.

BLA Core Curriculum

The BLA Core curriculum is designed to mirror as closely as possible the core curriculum of the main campus undergraduate programs in the College (https://bulletin.georgetown.edu/academics/undergraduate-regulations/georgetown-core-curriculum-requirements/). As such, the BLA core requirements match those of the University and College Core curricula, with only minor modifications (e.g., an expanded BLA writing curriculum and a slightly modified foreign language requirement).

The BLA Core curriculum consists of 18 required courses, as follows:

- Three courses (12 credits) in Writing, plus integrated writing requirement in the major*
  - WRIT 1143: Life Writing
  - WRIT 1150: Writing and Culture Seminar
  - One additional course in Writing, with emphases on problem- or project-based strategies, persuasive or professional writing, etc.
- Two courses in Philosophy
  - PHIL 1902: Philosophy and Intellectual History
  - One PHIL elective 2000+
- Two courses in Theology and Religious Studies
  - THEO 1000: Problem of God
  - One intermediate THEO elective, 2000-3999
- Two courses in History
  - HIST 1099: History Focus
  - One survey course from the following list: Intro to Early (1401), Intro to Late (1402), Indian Ocean World (1104), Atlantic World (1106), Pacific World (1107), Africa I (1200), Africa II (1201), South Asia I (1307), Modern South Asia II (1308), Americas I (1501), Latin America I (1503), Latin America II (1504), Middle East I (1601), or Middle East II (1602)
- One course in Mathematics/Computer Science
  - MATH 1040: Probability and Statistics
- One course to satisfy the Science For All (SFA) requirement
- One course in HALM (Humanities: Arts, Literature, Music, & Media)
- Two courses in Social Science
  - IDSS 2010 and 2020, Introduction to Interdisciplinary Social Science I and II
- Three courses/12 credits of foreign language**
- UNXD 1200 Race, Power and Justice at GU (2 credits), plus two additional “overlay” courses to fulfill the University-wide Pathways to Social Justice requirement***

NB: Consistent with College regulations, a course can fulfill both a core and a major requirement, but no course may fulfill two separate core requirements, with the exception of the Pathways to Social Justice “overlay” requirement explained above.

*As in main campus undergraduate programs in the College, the integrated writing requirement is “an intensive writing experience located within the student’s chosen major” designed to “prepare students to use the relevant forms, styles, and conventions of their chosen area(s) of study.” While writing will be integrated throughout all three of the major programs in the BLA degree, the capstone course in each of the major programs will be designated as the course that fulfills the integrated writing requirement.

**Unlike in main campus College undergraduate programs, where the foreign language requirement is a proficiency requirement, and it is possible to place out of the requirement via examination, all students in the BLA program are required to complete 12 credits of foreign language coursework. Languages will be offered in an intensive summer session, and the language(s) offered will vary.

Programs

- Cultural Humanities, BLA (https://bulletin.georgetown.edu/programs/cultural-humanities-bla/)
- Interdisciplinary Social Science, BLA (https://bulletin.georgetown.edu/programs/interdisciplinary-social-science-bla/)