Yale’s Directed Studies (DS) is an elective program offering first-year students a comprehensive interdisciplinary education in philosophy, literature, history, and political thought in the Western tradition. In three integrated, full-year courses, students progress through classical and biblical literature, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the twentieth century. They go on from DS to major in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

Created in the 1940s as an experiment in liberal arts education, DS offers students a single, coordinated plan of study. Today, the program engages more than forty faculty members and more than one hundred students each year. A jewel of Yale’s Humanities Program, DS is showcased by the Admissions Office in its outreach to prospective students.

Each of the three DS courses meets weekly for one lecture and two discussion seminars—the heart and soul of the program. Small groups of students work closely with professors to explore and debate influential texts. Colloquia featuring distinguished speakers from Yale and the wider world complement the regular course schedule. Special sessions at the Yale Art Gallery, the Yale Center for British Art, and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library bring the material to life.

Alumni of all ages attest that DS played a crucial role in forming their intellectual lives. DS encourages students to put rich and complex text into conversation with one another across disciplinary boundaries. Students learn to analyze challenging material, participate meaningfully in seminar discussions, and write clear and persuasive essays. Not surprisingly, DS students earn a disproportionately large number of Rhodes and Marshall scholarships, and DS alumni are well represented among the nation’s most respected writers, journalists, researchers, government officials, and business leaders.

“A great book has the inexhaustible density of reality itself. We read the great books and they read us. It has been a marvelous journey of discovery.”

—James Murphy ’80, ’90 Ph.D.

### Sample Readings

- Democracy in America
  Alexis de Tocqueville
- Fear and Trembling
  Søren Kierkegaard
- Hadji Murat
  Leo Tolstoy
- On Revolution
  Hannah Arendt
- On the Genealogy of Morality
  Friedrich Nietzsche
- On the Social Contract
  Jean Jacques Rousseau
- The Iliad
  Homer
- The Odyssey
  Homer
- The Inferno
  Dante
- The Republic
  Plato
- The Souls of Black Folk
  W.E.B. Du Bois
- The Sovereignty of Good
  Iris Murdoch
- The Tragedy of King Lear
  William Shakespeare
DIRECTED STUDIES HIGHLIGHTS

- Introduction to university-level work that presumes no prior knowledge and jump-starts the college careers of students from all backgrounds
- Lectures by world-renowned experts
- Faculty drawn from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Yale Law School, Yale Divinity School, and more
- Intense writing requirements that fine-tune skills and come with designated DS writing tutors
- Civil discourse through discussions that bridge background, culture, race, class, religion, and political world-view
- Camaraderie from a shared intellectual experience, comparable to that of extracurricular clubs and athletic teams
- Compatibility with any major, spanning the sciences, social sciences, or humanities
- Exploration of fundamental perennial human questions about beauty, truth, and justice

FACULTY

A sample list of faculty members who have recently taught DS are listed below. Additional faculty information can be found at directedstudies.yale.edu.

Howard Bloch
FRENCH

David Bromwich
ENGLISH

Verity Harte
PHILOSOPHY

Jennifer Herdt
DIVINITY

Anthony Kronman
LAW

Lawrence Manley
ENGLISH

Karuna Mantena
POLITICAL SCIENCE

Paul North
GERMAN

David Quint
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Kathryn Slanski
NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE

Steven Smith
POLITICAL SCIENCE

David Sorkin
HISTORY

Zoltán Szabó
PHILOSOPHY

Katrin Trüstedt
GERMAN

Kenneth Winkler
PHILOSOPHY

Ruth Yeazell
ENGLISH

“There is something about this program, in its intensity and the quality and resonance of its ideas and the shared commitment of its students and teachers, that is unlike any other educational experience at Yale.”

— Stephen L. Tomlin ’83

“I always think about DS in terms of connections — connections that are inherent in the texts, connections that we use between them and ourselves to make sense of the world, and most importantly, connections with our classmates.”

— Zoe Sharp ’00

directedstudies.yale.edu