



Frequently Asked Questions

How are Oxbridge majors different from traditional majors in similar subjects?

The primary difference is the tutorial method of study. In addition, the Oxbridge curriculum promotes study in greater depth. Whereas students in a classroom English or History major might take survey courses, using an anthology or textbook as their source of readings, Oxbridge students read selected topics from primary sources. The tutorial, with its emphasis on classic works and cutting-edge scholarship, leads naturally to detailed consideration of a single topic rather than coverage of many.

Are all my courses in tutorials?

No. Oxbridge concerns your major field of study. The Core Curriculum and electives are in regular classroom type courses outside of Oxbridge. Also, though an Oxbridge major is more demanding than an ordinary major, some Oxbridge students pursue further study in non-Oxbridge majors or minors. Some majors within Oxbridge also designate certain non-tutorial courses as “foundations” for the more focused and intensive tutorials.

Can I design my own major or tutorials?

No. The Oxbridge majors are shaped by the comprehensive examinations; the tutorials are designed by faculty who are experts in the field. However, students have some flexibility in emphasis and tutorials, especially during their year of study in England (this does not apply to molecular biology students).

How are comprehensive examinations different from finals?

In the British educational tradition on which the Oxbridge Honors program is based, students are assessed entirely on their performance on examinations at the end of the course of study. American education is based on continuous assessment through assignments, papers, and final examinations over the content of individual courses. William Jewell’s Oxbridge system is a compromise between the two. Students receive half their credit, and half the grade, for their work in the Oxbridge tutorials immediately upon completion of the tutorial, based on their work during the semester of study. The other half is granted upon satisfactory completion of the comprehensive examinations. Several tutorials, as well, as independent reading projects, prepare students for each comprehensive paper. The comprehensives are an opportunity for students to integrate their learning and demonstrate their mastery of a field of knowledge, rather than recite back what they have learned a single semester of study.

Do I have to choose a major right away?

No. Under the open year policy, first-year students are accepted into the Program as Oxbridge open students for an exploratory and trial year; students who enter the Program at the beginning of the sophomore year are open students for the fall semester and become majors for the spring semester. Toward the end of the open year, or for sophomore-entry students, toward the end of the fall semester, students will apply for admission to one of the Oxbridge majors. To be eligible to apply to a major, typically a student will have done well in a tutorial offered by that major.

What will my first year in Oxbridge be like?

In fall, you will take the Oxbridge Introductory Seminar, a special course exclusively for Oxbridgers designed to help students make the transition from high school to high-level honors work and from regular classes to tutorials. You may also take a foundation course for your intended Oxbridge major. Then, in the spring semester, you’ll take your first tutorial. By the end of the year, you will be years ahead of where you were when you started.

Is Oxbridge the only way to study in England?

No. Honors programs in Oxford, as well as many other study abroad opportunities, are open to all William Jewell students.

Will I be able to participate in other typical college activities?

Yes. Oxbridge students live and take most of their classes with the rest of the student body. While it is true that an Oxbridge major requires more time and greater focus, Oxbridge students regularly engage in a wide range of college activities, including music, theatre, debate, sports, leadership programs, student newspaper, and the full range of college activities.