Learning Objectives

The program has three broad learning objectives:

1. **Students learn to think across disciplines, to not be constrained by the methods and concepts of any one approach.** The name “Thematic Option” stems from its interdisciplinary strategy for general education, which allows students to trace specific concepts, such as the self, family, or progress, trans-historically and to discover the web of interconnection between academic fields visible from a thematic perspective. For example, CORE 102: Culture and Values may weave together literature, classics, history, philosophy, politics, and biology to consider questions of personal identity and social responsibility.

2. **Students develop a love of language, an appreciation for the power of the written and spoken word.**

   a. Through the CORE curriculum courses, students get a sense of the great tradition of Western thought, along with the ability to discuss it critically and open it up to inquiry. Students read primary texts rather than textbooks, which allows students to confront the canon on their own terms and form their own passionate points of view on these works.

   b. Thematic Option’s writing seminars emphasize close reading and argumentation through which students learn to express complex ideas cogently and concisely as persuasive writers. Importantly, students learn to integrate their own ideas with those of others, establishing their own voice and authority while supporting their stances by employing outside sources. Students should be able to assess broad rhetorical
situations and respond confidently in a way that maintains the integrity of the student’s own voice.

3. **Students learn to deal with ambiguity.** Many of the challenges and issues we face and our students will face do not have clear-cut responses or solutions. Thematic Option courses are not about providing answers, but asking questions, often the so-called big questions like What is truth? What is justice? What is love? Who am I? What responsibilities do I have to society? These are but a few of the grand questions with which Thematic Option students struggle as they become comfortable with the realm of uncertainty, an open space full of opportunities for exploration and debate within themselves and among each other.