

Perspectives

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Perspectives Editors

As academic departments begin recruiting prospective majors this spring, many students will confront the looming stress of making major life decisions. No amount of coercing can convince some students that a major does not have to determine whether they will become a waitress or an accountant, or live in a shack or a mansion. Regardless, major selections introduce a certain amount of stress and fear.

But what about choosing a minor? This can be a decision that reflects personal interests and not just practicality. Minors can be fun and eccentric. They do not need to prepare you for a Wall Street career, but rather can serve as an outlet for hidden interests. Who knows — an unusual minor may be the one feature that distinguishes your job application from the batch on the desk — or in the wastebasket.

The student body may be unaware of the many specialized minors that the university offers. American ethnic studies, cultural resource preservation, early Christian studies, environmental studies, international studies, journalism, Latin American studies, linguistics, medieval studies, urban studies and women's studies are some of the less well-known interdisciplinary minors that the university offers.

Minors in these and other academic subjects can be easily worked into the college course of study, since they only require 20 to 24 credits. Additionally, many minors are interdisciplinary, meaning that students can complete courses in several different departments to obtain the particular minor. A survey of the previously mentioned minors may provide students with guidance as they begin to carve out a course of study at the university.

American ethnic studies

American ethnic studies concentrates on the study of major ethnic groups who have settled in the United States.

According to the "Bulletin of Wake Forest University," the interdisciplinary minor requires a minimum of 24 credits.

As an interdisciplinary minor, American ethnic studies offers courses from a variety of departments. Students must take an introductory class and a research class, a four-credit class from the behavioral and social sciences, and a humanities class. They may select the remainder of their classes from a specified list of courses offered by various departments.

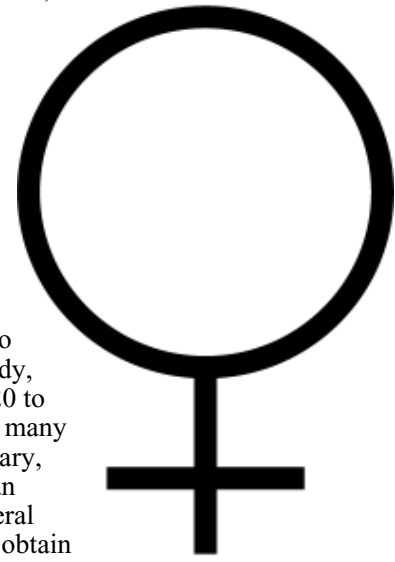
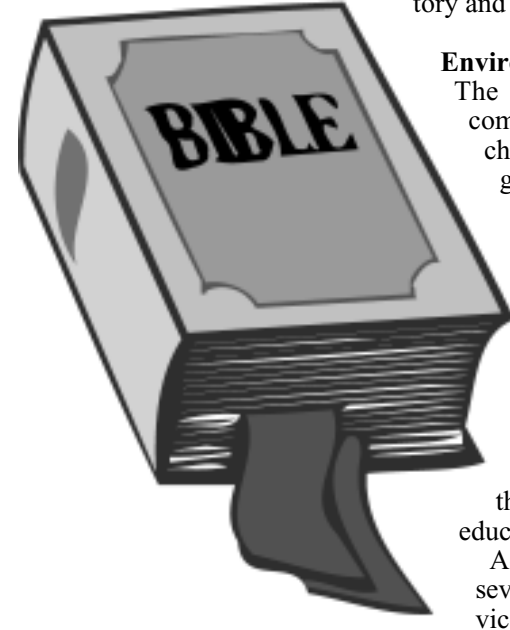
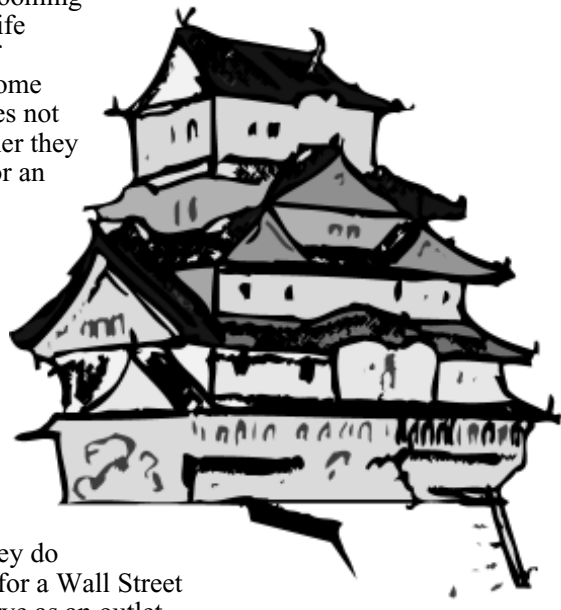
According to Earl Smith, director of the American ethnic studies program and the Rubin professor of American ethnic studies, the program is still in its beginning years. Therefore it is still the subject of remodeling and restructuring. Although it will take a few more years before the program can be accurately evaluated, he is pleased with the strides that the program has taken.

"The minor and other interdisciplinary minors are opportunities that students should take advantage of after fulfilling divisional requirements," Smith said.

Asian studies

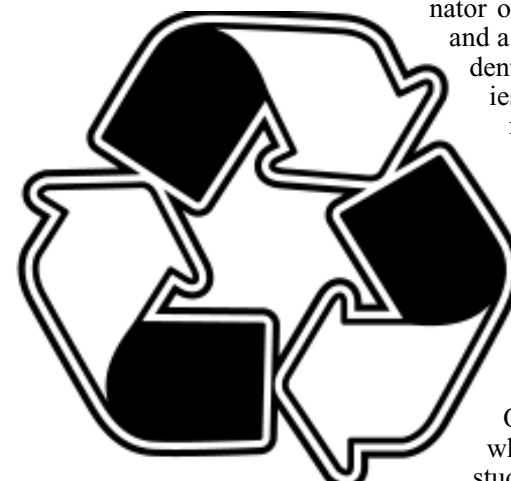
With the explosion of the Asian markets in the last 10 years, and the recent focus in academics on awareness of non-Western culture, a minor in Asian Studies is a valuable thing to have.

Wei-chin Lee, the coordinator of the Asian studies minor and an associate professor of politics, says the benefits of having an Asian Studies minor in today's society are numerous. "This minor broadens one's understanding of the non-Western world, which is an asset in the face of the trend toward globalization," Lee said. He also said that knowledge of



Minor decisions?

A variety of minors offer students the opportunity to experience academic disciplines outside of their majors



Asian language and culture might help one gain entry to the business world.

The interdisciplinary Asian studies minor gives students an advantage because a few of the required classes, such as Chinese 211, satisfy both a divisional requirement and the minor requirement. The department also encourages students to study abroad through either the university's China program or the Tokai program in Japan. Students can fulfill most of their requirements for the minor in these programs, and it also gives students the optimum experience for studying Asian culture and language.

Cultural resource preservation

The anthropology, art, history and sociology departments jointly offer a minor in cultural resource preservation, which focuses on training in historic preservation and protection of archeological, historical and architectural resources.

According to Ned Woodall, coordinator of the cultural resource preservation program and a professor of anthropology, "The field has considerable opportunities for jobs."

But Woodall said that not all of the students who minor plan to make a career in preservation. For many students, historic preservation is merely an interest.

Students who minor in cultural resource preservation must take studies in historic preservation in the history department, and four additional four-credit courses.

International studies

This is one of the most popular minors at the university because of the wide span of classes that satisfy its requirement. Many of these classes also fulfill divisional requirements.

The international studies minor was recently changed in an attempt to tailor it more to the needs of individual students. There is now only one required class, Introduction to International Studies. Students can choose from a variety of classes in several departments to complete the other 16 credits.

Requirements can also be fulfilled through study abroad programs, in which the department strongly encourages student participation.

"This minor exposes students very broadly to other cultures, and gives them

tools with which to study the past problems and misinterpretations cultures have had with each other," said Richard Sears, coordinator of the IS minor. "This minor has become a valuable tool for students in light of the trend towards globalization."

Latin American studies

As one of the most comprehensive minors at the university, Latin American studies requires that students demonstrate proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese in addition to the mandatory 20-credit requirement.

According to Peter Siavelis, an assistant professor of politics, the addition of the study abroad program in Cuba — one of only a few offered by American universities — provides students with an even better opportunity to study the Latin American culture.

There is also an option for students who want to pursue their interest in this area to obtain a joint BA/MA in Latin American studies in conjunction with Georgetown University. This program includes a semester abroad.

Early Christian studies

According to Mary Pendergraft, a coordinator of the early Christian studies program and an associate professor of classical languages, the program focuses on the

social and political worlds that produced the commonly studied early Christian texts.

As an interdisciplinary minor, early Christian studies requires 22 to 23 credits. Core courses are in Greek, religion and classics, and students may select the remainder of their classes from the art, history and philosophy departments.

Environmental studies

The environmental studies minor combines courses from the biology, chemistry, physics, geography, English, government, economics, history, law and anthropology departments.

Although in the past the minor has attracted mainly students majoring in the sciences, it has recently started to attract students from the economics, anthropology and history departments, said John Litcher, coordinator of the program and a professor of education.

According to Litcher, there are several entry level jobs in park services and with waste management services for which minors are qualified upon graduation.

Linguistics

Students who choose to receive a minor in linguistics study types of languages, language families, language usage and social issues of language use.

In addition, they are encouraged to study foreign languages and become fluent in at least one foreign language.

This interdisciplinary minor requires an introductory linguistics class and 16 additional credits from a range of departments. The program recommends that students take at least one class in historical linguistics.

Stan Whitley, the coordinator of the program and an associate professor of romance languages, said that linguistics applies to a broad range of liberal arts studies, such as foreign languages, English, the social sciences and education. "Language is a distinctly human activity that reveals a lot about our culture," he said.

Medieval studies

According to Gillian Overing, a coordinator of the medieval studies program and a professor of English, many students are involved in medieval studies, even if they are not pursuing a minor in the program.

The medieval studies minor requires 24 credits from at least three different departments. The departments range from art to theater, offering courses such as the luxury of arts in the Middle Ages and the history of Western theater.

Overing said that many students who pursue a minor in medieval studies attend a six-week summer medieval program at Oxford University.

Students can receive six credits through the program which count toward the minor.

Urban Studies

Donald Frey, the coordinator of the Urban Studies program and a professor of economics, describes the urban studies minor as the closest thing that the university has to an urban planning program, which is offered at many universities.

The minor requires 20 credits from the following departments: art, economics, religion, sociology, education, history, and politics.

"The urban studies minor allows students to take departmental courses organized around a theme," Frey said. "It helps advance the liberal arts education."

Women's Studies

A student who wishes to minor in women's studies must take a minimum of 24 credits, including an introductory course in women's studies. The interdisciplinary minor draws from both humanities classes and courses in the social sciences and sciences.

Suzanne Danks, a senior minoring in women's studies, said she feels that the interdisciplinary nature of the minor gives students a broader understanding of the topic. Danks said that her minor will help her next year as she studies women's history in graduate school.