The Liberal Core
Habib University has chosen the liberal arts and sciences model of education out of its commitment to the development of leadership potential as an essential goal of a truly higher education. At the core of our institutional identity as a liberal arts institution is our flagship three-year Liberal Core curriculum that seeks to fulfill our motto of yohsin: ‘The worth of all humans is in the measure of their thoughtful self-cultivation.’ As they take on the task of forming themselves into adults, professionals and beyond, the Liberal Core is designed to enable students to knowledgably reflect with rigor on a wide swath of the most critical aspects of their experience in the world they inherit today.

The Core commences with the systematic development of multiple reading, communicative, and presentation skills that will continue to be advanced throughout our students’ undergraduate careers as an essential part of their education at Habib. The curriculum then turns to a recurring multidisciplinary engagement with the history, features and structures of the modern period and world, drawing on powerful, state-of-the-art texts and artifacts, in a range of media, from across the arts, humanities and social sciences. From colonialism to nationalism and the nation-state, from war to the global political economy, from the growth of modern media to science and technology in their relationship to society, our Liberal Core is committed to a rigorous analysis and understanding of modernity in all its local, regional, and global complexity. An encompassing historical understanding is essential to the classic liberal education – one that our core curriculum provides with a critical, modern edge.

Habib University’s principle of yohsin tells us that the cultivation of a beautiful and thoughtful self that shines with the light of care, knowledge and universality is an ancient and universal aspiration. Humanities and the humanistic spirit – which are all about excellence, grace, generosity, knowledge and universality – proliferate across the life and legacy of all cultures.

What makes Habib University’s Liberal Core unique is its simultaneous emphasis
on both Western and regional humanities and knowledge. Our Core has been developed in consultation with faculty from leading global and regional universities but retains an incisive focus on the humanistic knowledge and inheritance that are unique to Pakistan in its surround. Our Core is designed to instill in our students an appreciation of their own context and cultures of thought, a grounded sense of their own self-worth and potential, and to do so in a spirit of global relation and expansive universality.

**Liberal Core Courses**

The Liberal Core consists of six intellectually stimulating, interdisciplinary courses taken by all Habib University students. Together these courses form the shared intellectual foundation upon which Habib’s community of learners is built.

**CORE 101: Rhetoric & Communication**

The command of language and the ability to communicate effectively in speech and writing is essential to leadership. This is why eloquence in the broadest sense is one of the most highly valued benefits of a liberal arts education. The opening course in our Liberal Core is designed to develop the reading and presentation skills – written, oral, applicative and visual – that our students will need to excel at Habib University and beyond. Our curriculum nurtures our students’ rhetorical abilities throughout their college career, especially through the Liberal Core. Rhetoric & Communication is designed to first identify the different aspects of expression and eloquence as distinct and essential abilities, and to develop and improve them through application and practice. Cicero says in his classic text on rhetoric, De Oratore: “Since all the activity and ability of an orator falls into five divisions, he must first hit upon what to say; then manage and marshal his discoveries, not merely in orderly fashion, but with a discriminating eye for the exact weight as it were of each argument; next go on to array them in the adornments of style; after that keep them guarded in his memory; and in the end deliver them with effect and charm.”

The material, classroom experience, and exercises of Rhetoric & Communication are designed to cultivate all five of these critical abilities, together with sophisticated reading skills. Our students will learn to make their speech and writing a total rhetorical experience, allowing them to communicate as effectively as they can across a variety of media. Class content will focus on compelling and relevant texts broadly defined – essays, journalism, speeches, advertisements, websites, etc. – and chosen to elicit opinion and encourage discussion and debate. As they develop their powers of reading powerful texts, students will practice and improve communication skills through regular writing
assignments, revision exercises, individual and group presentations, and the utilization of ‘alternative’ (non-traditional) communication media like websites and social media. Rhetoric & Communication will also feature the ethics of discourse and communication, so that tact and respect for the other become an essential part of students’ experience and understanding of rhetorical ability.

**CORE 102: What is Modernity?**

No one in the medieval world thought they were ‘medieval.’ The belief that we live in a distinct period of human history – that of ‘modernity’ – sets us apart from all pre-modern peoples. It is a defining aspect of who we are, essential to our modern identities. It is thus imperative to the task of understanding both ourselves and our world to ask the question:

What is it to be modern? What is modernity? Our ‘modernity’ is the very air we breathe. It encompasses, at a gathering pace, all aspects of our lives. This is why the question of modernity has been a central concern across the range of disciplines and fields of the arts, humanities and social sciences throughout the modern period. This course is thus designed as a multidisciplinary study of key texts that illuminate the various features and structures of our lives and our world, of the dynamic culture of modernity.

What is Modernity? Is a gateway course for Habib University’s flagship Liberal Core Curriculum. Through critical and intensive engagement – in discussion, debate, and writing – with both classic and contemporary texts from the modern history of reflection on modernity, students will gain a sophisticated and articulate understanding of both themselves and their world that will be further refined throughout the core.

**CORE 201: Pakistan & Modern South Asia**

For the first time in history, nation-states – including that of Pakistan – emerged in the region of South Asia in the middle of the 20th century. How did such a world-historical event come about? What has it meant for the peoples of this region? In short, what is the history of our present?

This question takes on a particular urgency in Pakistan as the region passes through the current period of crisis and change. With a special focus on the emergence and trajectory of Indo-Muslim nationalism and the creation of Pakistan, this course will be a conspectus of the modern history of South Asia from the colonial
core 201: pakistan & modern south asia

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period, including the rise of anti-colonial
nationalism and decolonization, to the cold
war and the contemporary period of turmoil
and transformation. while focusing on the
history of pakistan’s challenging present,
students will also learn about the larger,
regional and global context in which that
history has unfolded.

apart from the main outlines of the history of
modern south asia, students will also learn to
place the region’s colonial modernity within
the larger framework of modern history.
students will crucially learn to identify major
features of the colonial economy and state,
under which—especially after the great
rebellion of 1857—regional religious and
other social reform movements emerged,
nationalisms formed, and the dramatic
transformation of regional traditions took
place, processes that continue into the present.
they will learn to see contemporary conflicts
and ideologies as specific to the modern period
rather than as natural cultural expressions,
and will begin to see regional cultures and societies
themselves as historical entities.

course materials will again be multidisciplinary
—including, e.g., anthropology, literature and
film—but will be primarily historical. this
course will combine lectures and seminars, and
will be writing intensive.

core 202 & 301: hikma i & ii –
history of islamic thought

in the manner of the classic liberal core
curriculum, habib university’s flagship
two-semester course sequence in regional and
global humanities, hikma i & ii, takes the
students to the pre-modern and ancient worlds
of philosophy, religion, literature and art that
remain our heritage. placed after our students
have successfully grasped the specific nature
and thought of the world of modernity, the
hikma courses have been designed to fulfill a
critical goal of the classic liberal arts education:
the task of inheritance—a task that includes

commentary and discussion, as well as criticism
and judgment. bridging the students’ crucial
sophomore and junior-years, this sequence is
designed to take our students to the next level
of humanistic study and conceptualization, as
well as of sophistication in reading, discussion,
critical thinking and writing.

the content of the hikma course sequence
responds to the widespread call to revisit the
humanistic inheritance of the world’s many
civilizations and regions, and to include this human heritage as an essential part of the liberal arts curriculum. The course thus takes an expansive world-historical and global view of the region’s rich heritage of Islamic thought in its intense and distinctive engagement with both Greek antiquity and the other Abrahamic traditions, as well as ambient regional traditions, such as Buddhism and the Bhakti. The Hikma course sequence thus offers the students of Habib University a panoramic and rigorously Universalist perspective that connects with Islam’s distinctive inheritance, one that is also shared with its neighbors.

The syllabus begins with an exploration of the deep philosophical and spiritual content of key source texts of the Abrahamic and Semitic traditions, especially the Quran and Hadith, as well as material from some of Islam’s earliest thinkers before its encounter with ancient Greek thought. The course then turns to some of the key texts from Greek antiquity - by Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus – that have been read avidly in the philosophical tradition of Islam. This interaction provided a productive engagement that has resonated through the centuries in Islam’s distinctive literatures, and philosophical and spiritual discourses. The course thus reads the rich texts emanating from this encounter in Muslim thinkers such as Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra, as well as philosophically and spiritually rich Islamic poets, such as Rūmī and Amir Khusraw.

Another goal of the Hikma course sequence is to serve as a substantial introduction to the cross-philosophical engagement between Islam and other Asian traditions. Since such an introduction is not meaningful without some familiarity with non-Islamic traditions, the latter will be achieved through close reading and discussion of select primary sources in Indic and Chinese thought. In addition, the course will be focused on contemporary critical reflections in comparative metaphysics and theology particularly as they pertain and apply to parallels and contrasts between Buddhism, Taoism and Islamic spirituality. The overall objective of these sections of the course is to provide insights into Islam as a Universalist religion that has contributed in bridging the gap between the Semitic and Western world on the one hand, and the religious worlds of South and East Asia on the other hand.
The course will end with readings from the living inheritance of the various traditions explored, in the contemporary art, literature and thought of South Asia.

Though the course material will be primarily philosophical and literary, we will also engage material from history, politics and the arts.

**CORE 302: Science, Technology & Society**

The centrality of science and technology in the contemporary world is unparalleled in the history of human societies and cultures. Because of the enormous power of scientific thought to shape ideas it has been the foundation upon which notions of progress, modernity, and even freedom and liberty have been built since the end of the 18th century. Science, Technology & Society is a critical interdisciplinary course that concludes the Liberal Core by challenging advanced students with the central assertion that, in the words of contemporary philosopher of science Sergio Sismondo, “science and technology are thoroughly social activities.”

The course will draw upon Science and Technology Studies (STS) to demonstrate that the production and practice of scientific knowledge and technological development is a social and an historical process in which both scientists and citizens play a key role. Students will examine the ways in which scientific communities create and regulate methods, establish consensus, and uphold or challenge theoretical models and technological advancements. In addition, throughout the semester they will be asked to critically analyze the social impact and meaning of scientific breakthroughs and technological advances in historical and contemporary contexts, giving students ample opportunities to explore the role of science within society.

Because scientific progress necessarily represents change, the topics explored will evolve regularly, but examples include: stem-cell research and medical ethics; mobility and transportation; communication and the production and circulation of knowledge; surveillance and privacy; and the changing face of labor, from the Industrial Revolution to globalization.
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Please check our Admissions & Aid page for updates:
http://habib.edu.pk/admissions-aid/

habib.edu.pk/academics/
liberal-core/

For complete course description and department requirements, see Habib’s online course catalog at
www.habib.edu.pk