

NEW COLLEGE CORE CURRICULUM

(Draft Proposal, 7.21.2023)

THE TECHNE-LOGOS CORE CURRICULUM

“In 1971, 73 percent of incoming freshmen said that it is essential or very important to ‘develop a meaningful philosophy of life,’ 37 percent to be “very well-off financially” (not well-off, note, but very well-off). By 2011, the numbers were almost reversed, 47 percent and 80 percent, respectively.”¹ At New College, we believe that students do not have to sacrifice meaning for money or vice versa. The proposed curriculum is designed to foster an innovative and holistic learning environment by embracing the Greek concepts of Techne and Logos. By incorporating these two pillars, we will provide students with an education that is unparalleled in its breadth, depth, meaning, and relevance.

DEFINING THE TERMS:

Logos

The Greek word “Logos” (λόγος) encompasses the following concepts:

- **Reason and Rationality:** Logos represents critical thinking and the ability to analyze and understand the world through intellect and logic.
- **Speech and Expression:** Logos also represents the power of language, communication, and the ability to convey meaning and knowledge. In this sense, Logos represents the capacity for logical discourse and argumentation, as well as precise and meaningful communication.

¹ William Deresiewicz (2014, 79), *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*.

- **Universal Order:** In philosophical and metaphysical contexts, Logos can represent a cosmic principle that governs the universe. It embodies the idea of an underlying order, structure, and harmony.
- **Reflection and Meaning:** Logos can also carry symbolic significance, representing deeper truths, principles, or concepts beyond a literal interpretation. Reflection and contemplation provide us access to a more profound understanding of meaning, substance, and purpose.

Logos captures the interconnectedness of reason, language, logic, reflection, communication, order, and meaning. It encompasses intellectual curiosity, logical reasoning, and the ability to comprehend and convey complex ideas through speech or expression. The logos-driven curriculum empowers students to engage meaningfully with complex issues, ask questions, solve problems, and adapt to an ever-changing world.

The way students at New College access the Logos curriculum is through Great Works. By “Great Works,” we mean those exceptional and enduring products of imagination, ingenuity, and craft whose richness and complexity have a profound impact on human thought, knowledge, and artistic expression. Great works are generally familiar and foundational, often referenced, imitated, lampooned, debated, and engaged by other works, yet they continue to surprise and seduce each reader/observer who encounters them afresh.

By engaging with foundational primary sources, students will explore enduring themes, engage in deep critical analysis, and develop a broader understanding of human knowledge and creativity. The selection of Great Works will span different cultures, times, and disciplines, providing students with a unique perspective and a powerful educational experience.

A more focused subset of Logos courses are the **Enduring Human Questions** classes, which concentrate on persistent inquiries and fundamental issues that have intrigued and challenged humanity across cultures, generations, and intellectual traditions. These questions revolve around profound aspects of the human experience, often concerning our existence, purpose, values, and understanding of the world. Enduring human questions often transcend specific contexts and persist throughout history, continuing to stimulate intellectual curiosity and inspire philosophical, scientific, literary, artistic, and ethical investigations. The curriculum will include a requirement that all students take at least two Enduring Human Questions courses.

Techné

The Greek word “Techné” (τέχνη) comprises the following definitions:

- **Skill and Invention:** Techne refers to a particular skill or craft acquired through practice, knowledge, and expertise. It emphasizes the ability to create or produce something with skillful artisanship and technical proficiency.
- **Applied Knowledge:** Techne also refers to practical knowledge, know-how, or the ability to apply specialized skills in a specific field. It involves the practical understanding of a subject, including techniques, methods, and procedures.
- **Art and Artistry:** Techne is closely associated with artistic creation and expression. It encompasses the knowledge and techniques required to produce works of art, whether in the realms of painting, sculpture, music, literature, or any other creative endeavor.
- **Systematic Approach:** Techne can involve a systematic approach to problem-solving or the application of knowledge in a structured manner. It emphasizes a methodical and disciplined approach to achieving desired outcomes.
- **Mastery and Expertise:** Techne implies a level of mastery and expertise that comes with experience and continual refinement of skills. It reflects a deep understanding and command of the principles, techniques, and traditions associated with a particular craft or discipline.

As a fundamental principle of the curriculum at New College, Techne emphasizes the significance of applied knowledge: creating, experiencing, analyzing, experimenting, and solving. The techne-driven curriculum aims to equip students with the tools, techniques, and mindset necessary to innovate and apply knowledge in a tangible and purposeful manner.

A more focused subset of Techne courses are **Data and the Digital World** classes, which focus on data exploration, analytics, digital tools, and technology. Students gain theoretical knowledge and practical skills to navigate the complexities of working with data and technology, leveraging its potential in various domains. The curriculum will include a requirement that all students take at least two Data and the Digital World course.

THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE

By implementing a new core curriculum based on Techne and Logos, New College will provide students with a transformative and cohesive educational experience. Our fully integrated curriculum includes requirements for classes focused on Logos, Techne, Great Works, Enduring Human Questions, and Data and the Digital World. While these courses will inherently build

community among students, Interim-President Corcoran firmly believes that New College must provide an exceptional academic experience that binds all New College students together, both within their cohort and year after year, and propels them successfully into their lives after college.

The proposed plan is to require all incoming students—both first-years and transfers—to enroll in a course on Homer’s *Odyssey* and a course titled Data: Exploration, Visualization, and Communication. These courses will be offered in both the fall and spring semesters, and will function as indispensable foundations for students as they begin their New College career, setting the stage for students to approach their education with curiosity, resilience, and openness to new ideas. In consultation with the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) committee, the most successful elements of the SET SAIL program (our QEP for SACSCOC accreditation that focuses on student retention) will be incorporated into the new First-Year Experience.

Beyond providing a unique and purposeful academic experience, reading the *Odyssey* together and studying Data: Exploration, Visualization, and Communication together will have numerous benefits. It will:

- Promote a sense of community, belonging, and unity among students.
- Create a meaningful connection with faculty mentors.
- Facilitate the academic transition for first-year/transfer students.
- Strengthen the shared intellectual community.
- Establish a common foundation and collective reference point for all New College students.
- Develop students’ analytical, interpretive, and critical thinking skills.
- Enhance communication, collaboration, and interpersonal skills.
- Prepare students for New College’s rigorous academic/intellectual odyssey.
- Create opportunities for intellectual exchange among students from diverse backgrounds and academic disciplines.
- Build a sense of tradition.
- Contribute to a well-rounded and enriched educational experience.

HOMER’S *ODYSSEY* (1ST YEAR EXPERIENCE)

The central focus of this course is for all students to read and study Homer’s *Odyssey*, a foundational work of Western literature. This unique opportunity will provide students with a shared academic experience, foster interdisciplinary learning, and promote a sense of community

within the student body. It will also introduce students to our curriculum, with its focus on Logos and Enduring Human Questions. Students will wrestle with Homer's epic, contemplating and discussing questions such as: What is the nature of heroism and the heroic journey? What is the value of challenge, sacrifice, and personal growth? How do we shape our sense of self in our search for personal meaning and purpose? What is the nature of identity and self-discovery? What are the consequences of hubris and the pursuit of power? What is the role of fate and free will in human life? What is the nature of temptation and the consequences of indulgence? What is the significance of loyalty, love, and family bonds? What is the value of storytelling, memory, and the preservation of cultural memory?

COURSE FORMATS:

A student's first year provides the perfect context to create an experimental, experiential, community building experience. The program will offer a range of activities and resources to facilitate students' deep engagement with Homer's *Odyssey*. The specifics of the plan are open for discussion, modification, and year-to-year improvement, but some of the potential formats include:

- **Short Lectures:** Faculty in Classics will provide a brief overview to contextualize each book of the *Odyssey* and deliver potential discussion topics for break-out groups.
- **Break-out groups:** Faculty from throughout the college will meet with students for discussion. This will model for students that everyone, regardless of background and academic interest, can approach, enjoy, think about, and discuss art and literature, thereby embedding a focus on lifelong learning and adaptability skills.
- **Guest lectures:** National and international experts on Homer and the *Odyssey* will visit and offer lectures to the group (these will be assembled every few years into a book, *The New College Odyssey Lectures*).
- **Performance:** Staged readings of selected books/scenes from the *Odyssey*, in English and in Ancient Greek, which will offer a dynamic understanding of the story and aim to recreate the original performative experience.
- **Reading Together:** Students in break-out groups leave their phones in a basket, sit down together and read a book of the *Odyssey* either silently or aloud (typically 20-30 minutes), and then discuss the content, experience, ideas, themes, etc.
- **Literary Analysis through Art:** Students will interpret artwork, videos, and music inspired by specific scenes or themes of the *Odyssey*, promoting visual and musical literacy, deeper engagement with the text, and critical analysis.
- **Contemporary Connections:** By identifying parallels between the challenges faced by Odysseus and modern-day individuals, students will develop empathy, critical thinking,

analysis of universal human experiences, and the application of ancient wisdom to current contexts.

- **Collaborative Storytelling:** By assigning a specific episode or character from the *Odyssey* to small groups, students can create their own interpretations, reimagine scenes, or develop alternative endings. This collaborative storytelling approach allows students to exercise their creativity, teamwork, and narrative skills.
- **Interactive Story Maps:** Digital tools or platforms will allow students to create and/or enjoy interactive story maps of the *Odyssey*, which will promote visual storytelling and a comprehensive understanding of the epic's geography.
- **Virtual Reality (VR) Experiences:** With the right equipment, students could be transported into the world of the *Odyssey*, where they can explore the world of the Ancient Greeks.
- **Travel:** With sufficient resources, students could take an educational tour “in the footsteps of Odysseus,” where they visit (among other locations) Troy, the Cyclades, Pylos, Sicily, and Ithaca.
- **Other Extracurricular Activities:** Each semester could become an immersive *Odyssey* experience, with a range of community-building activities, including an *Odyssey* trivia night, an epic scavenger hunt, a mythical costume party, *Odyssey* culinary events, a thematic movie marathon, an *Odyssey* e-gaming competition, a raft-building contest, and a mythical art showcase.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND BENEFITS:

The proposed *Odyssey* experience aims to create a unified academic experience for all students. Incoming students will engage in a wide-ranging study of the epic poem alongside faculty and other students.

To ensure the success of the program, faculty members from various disciplines will collaborate to design a comprehensive curriculum. Students will be organized into reading groups facilitated by faculty members (and, perhaps, advanced students). These small groups will discuss their readings, analyze key passages, and explore the broader implications of the text, particularly in relation to “Enduring Human Questions.” These discussions will encourage close reading, critical thinking, friendly discourse, and the building of meaningful relationships.

The program will also include a series of guest lectures and workshops led by visiting scholars and experts in Homeric studies. These sessions will enrich students' understanding of the *Odyssey*, providing additional insights and perspectives. They could also be open to the public, resulting in more community engagement. Students could even connect with the local community through public readings, workshops, or partnerships with cultural institutions. (The Ringling Museum, for

example, houses two Odyssey-themed works of art: *Les femmes chasseresses*, Edward Burne-Jones, 1891/1898; and *Hermes Rescues Odysseus from Circe*, Giovanni Paolo Panini and Workshop, 1718).

DATA: EXPLORATION, VISUALIZATION, AND COMMUNICATION (1ST YEAR EXPERIENCE)

We live in a world filled with data. We are constantly consuming and producing it, but how do we make sense of it? Data helps us become aware of things we cannot see, raises countless questions, and informs our decisions, but finding meaning in it often requires identifying patterns and relationships that are not immediately evident. This class will equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively work with data, understand it, and create visual representations that communicate data-driven insights to different audiences. Students will exit this class feeling empowered to analyze, visualize, and communicate data so they can make and defend well-informed decisions.

COURSE FORMAT:

Data: Exploration, Visualization, and Communication will be a single course made up of small sections that share common learning objectives and a core syllabus. Each section will have its own focus and choice of tools (e.g., Excel, Tableau, R, ArcGIS, and/or Python) appropriate to that discipline. This allows students to tailor their experience to their own interests and goals, and also recognizes and accommodates the wide variety of backgrounds and skills that students bring to New College. Focus areas might include:

- Visualizing works of art and literature (digital humanities)
- Storymaps (telling a story with multimedia and maps)
- Geographic data and GIS
- Community assessment
- New College (using the college's own data)
- Sports statistics
- Creative content data (music and media)
- Quantitative political analysis

Each section will meet at the same time, which will allow for group gatherings, but on a day-to-day basis, it will alternate between active lecture/discussion sessions and technical workshops. Students will get hands on experience with real tools and real data, and the course will culminate

in an individual or small-group student project, in which students create and present a data visualization of their choosing. These projects will be reviewed and assessed by their peers, reflecting the students’ roles as both producers and consumers of data.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND BENEFITS:

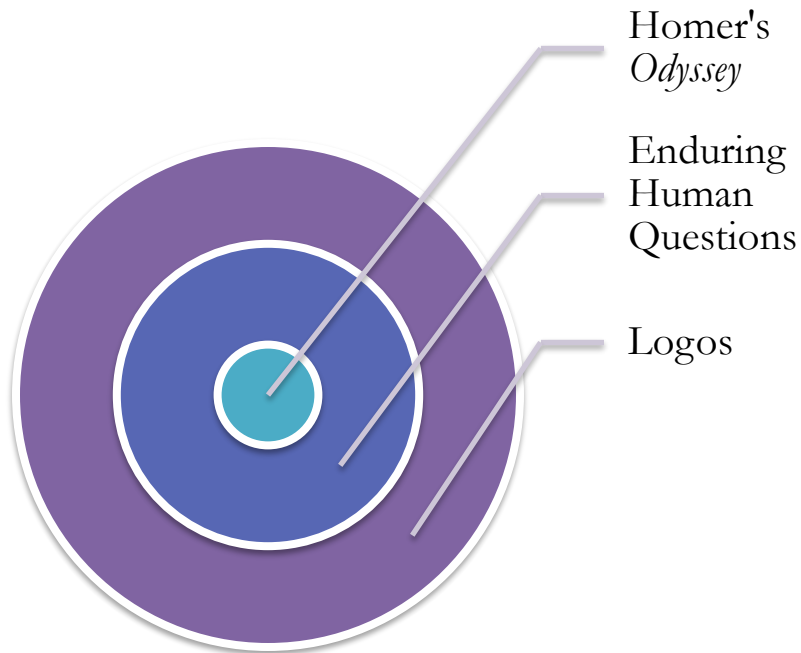
Students in Data: Exploration, Visualization, and Communication will gain critical data literacy skills while gaining experience with state of the art tools for exploring and visualizing data (some of which offer certifications that students could pursue). Upon completing this course, students will be able to understand more deeply how to deal with data, how to interpret it, display it, and communicate it. They will be exposed to the best (and worst) practices of information design and be able to analyze data visualizations that they encounter in daily life. They will also be exposed to the invaluable “investigative cycle,” which consists of problem identification, planning, data collection, analysis, communication, and evaluation.

Because there is no one-size-fits-all data-oriented class and because data literacy requires an active learning approach, Data: Exploration, Visualization, and Communication will be run by a dedicated Data Science or Computer Science faculty member and then divided into smaller sections (ideally of around 20 students each), which will provide a more meaningful, tailored educational experience. The course sections will be run by various faculty collaborators and dedicated instructors, with student teaching assistants serving as resources in the technical workshops. There will also be significant coordination with co-requisite offerings, tutoring (including Knack tutors, QRC staff, etc.), and technical support.

| STATE REQUIREMENTS | CYC (current) | PROPOSED NEW CURRICULUM |
|--------------------|----------------------|---|
| — | — | Logos: Homer’s <i>Odyssey</i> (First-Year Experience, Graduation Requirement) |
| — | Diverse Perspectives | Techne: Data: Exploration, Visualization, and Communication (First-Year Experience, Graduation Requirement) |
| Elective | Elective | Logos: Enduring Human Questions |
| Elective | Elective | Logos: Enduring Human Questions |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Elective | Elective | Techne: Data and the Digital World |
| Humanities | Breadth: Humanities | Logos or Techne: Humanities |
| Social Sciences | Breadth: Social Science | Logos or Techne: Social Sciences |
| Natural Science | Breadth: Natural Science | Logos or Techne: Natural Sciences |
| Math/Statistics | Math/Statistics | Techne: Math/Statistics |
| Communications | Writing-Enhanced | Logos or Techne: Communications / Writing |
| Civic Literacy | Civic Literacy | Logos: Civic Literacy |
| 36 Credit Hours / 9 Courses | 40 Credit Hours / 10 Courses | 44 Credit Hours / 11 Courses |

The proposed curriculum requires **four Techne classes, four Logos classes, and three classes from either Techne or Logos**. Two of the four Logos classes must address Enduring Human Questions, and two of the four Techne classes must address Data and the Digital World. Satisfactory completion of the *Odyssey* Experience and Data: Exploration, Visualization, & Communication are required for graduation.



Homer's Odyssey

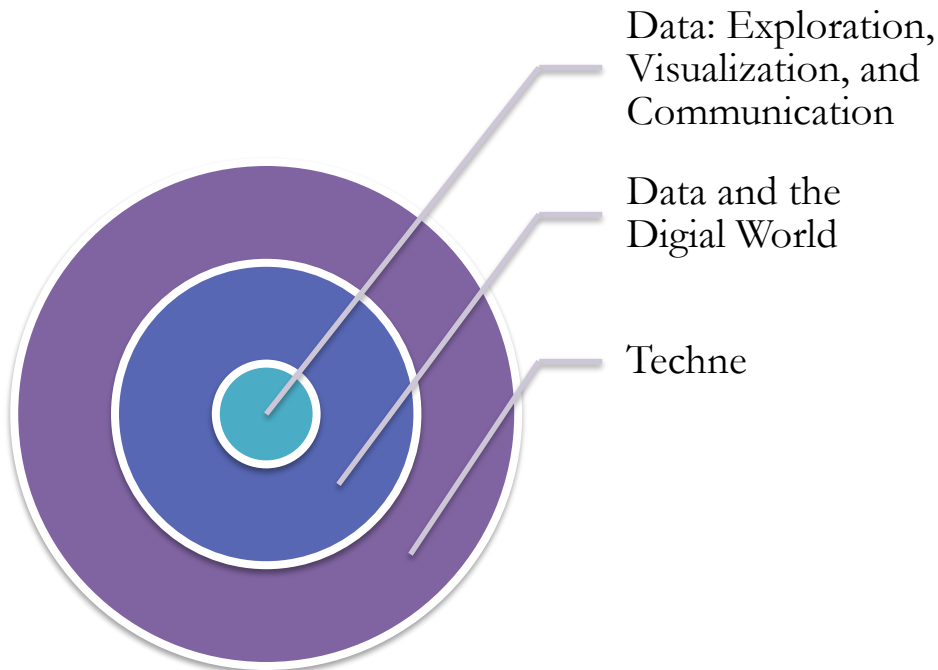
Homer's *Odyssey* is a first-year experience required for graduation. This course provides students with a shared academic experience that fosters interdisciplinary learning and promotes a sense of community within the student body, while closely examining one of Western culture's most influential literary works.

Enduring Human Questions

Enduring Human Questions courses focus on profound aspects of the human experience, often concerning our existence, purpose, values, and understanding of the world. All students must take at least two Enduring Human Questions courses.

Logos

Logos is the Ancient Greek concept of reason, discourse, logic, reflection, and communication. The way students engage with the concept of Logos is through Great Works, those exceptional and enduring products of imagination, ingenuity, and craft whose richness and complexity have a profound impact on human thought, knowledge, and artistic expression.



DATA: EXPLORATION, VISUALIZATION, AND COMMUNICATION

Data: Exploration, Visualization, and Communication is a first-year experience required for graduation. The term “data” refers to anything we can analyze in order to learn about the world or solve problems. The goal is to provide a foundation that allows students to use data, visualize data, and communicate data to investigate their passions and answer real-world questions.

Data and the Digital World

Classes labeled “Data and the Digital World” focus on data exploration, analytics, digital tools, and technology. Students gain theoretical knowledge and practical skills to navigate the complexities of working with data and technology, leveraging its potential in diverse domains. All students must take at least two Data and the Digital World courses.

Techne

Techne is the Greek concept of skill, invention, artistry, and applied knowledge. Techne classes aim to equip students with the tools, techniques, and mindset necessary to create, innovate, and apply knowledge in a tangible and purposeful manner. Students hone the practical knowledge and skills that will make them essential contributors to the modern world.

CONCLUSION

With declining matriculation, poor retention numbers, weak scores on state metrics, and the impending “enrollment cliff,”² New College of Florida is facing certain existential threats. This document is a milestone on our journey toward formulating a fresh curriculum to address these concerns; but at this stage, only a subgroup of our faculty members have had the opportunity to contribute their insights. As we continue to refine and enrich this proposal, we will extend the conversation to include the entire faculty body (most likely at the September 13, 2023 faculty meeting). This will ensure the widest possible range of input, encouraging comprehensive participation in shaping and supporting our new curriculum.

While we certainly hope the various elements of this proposal will be successful from the start, the Summer Working Groups aimed for flexibility, which is paramount when creating a new curriculum with record speed. We have worked to create a revolutionary, collective, and cohesive educational experience, while also guaranteeing that all individual AOCs are still practicable and that all students feel empowered to develop their own path. Nevertheless, it is quite likely that this new curriculum will have unforeseen effects (both positive and negative), and we believe that we have designed a program that is adaptable, where we can nimbly add, remove, or change elements in future years.

To ensure the effectiveness of the new core curriculum, we will need to adhere to accreditation guidelines (whether those of SACS or another accreditor), and we will need to execute a comprehensive training and assessment plan. Training and resources will be provided to assist faculty in designing courses that align with curricular goals, and ongoing evaluation and feedback mechanisms will be designed to assess student learning outcomes, course effectiveness, and the overall impact of the curriculum.

Ultimately, by implementing a new core curriculum that integrates Logos, Techne, Enduring Human Questions, and Data and the Digital World, Interim-President Corcoran and the faculty of New College hope to provide students with a transformative educational experience centered on a deep appreciation for the wisdom of the past and innovative skills for success in the future.

² “Demographers and economists have warned for more than a decade that, because of a decline in birth rates following the Great Recession of 2008, the number of traditional college-age students will drop dramatically. That steep drop is expected to begin in 2025 and continue for a decade.” Merisotis, Jamie “The College Problem In America Is About More Than Cost,” *Forbes* Mar 15, 2023 (Accessed 7.17.2023).