

Choose Your Electives Wisely

consider the following when selecting elective courses that will work for you

Interests

Ask yourself if you think that you'll find the course interesting. The more interested you are in a class, the more likely you will be engaged in the course – the more you will enjoy it, spend the time doing the work, and be committed to succeeding in it. Think back to previous courses you've enjoyed and excelled in; then ask yourself what it was about these courses that you enjoyed. Was it the subject? the teacher? the format? Once you've identified what makes courses interesting for you, use these criteria to narrow down your options.

Grades

Ask yourself if this course will help you get a good mark. Consider the kind of course that it is, and the type of evaluative components that the professor is likely to use. Arts and Social Science courses generally require written assignments, discussion groups, and exams; whereas Science, Engineering and Math courses require tests, labs, exams, etc. Ask yourself if you have the skills needed to successfully complete the coursework in the electives you're considering.

Time

Ask yourself how much time you will need to commit to the course. Is it mostly lecture time and preparation time? Or will you have labs, tutorials, discussion groups, or out of class activities too? Try and find out just how much time each course will take up in your weekly schedule – remembering that for every 3 hour lecture you have, you should plan to set aside at least (if not more) 3 hours outside of class time for readings, studying, and assignments.

Professor

While it's shouldn't be a "make-or-break" deciding factor for choosing electives, an instructor can influence how much you enjoy a course. Consider taking courses with award-winning Carleton profs; or with profs that others recommend. Finding out what teaching style the prof uses (lectures, slides, guest speakers, etc) and what their area of expertise is can help you determine whether or not the course might be a good option for you.

Long Term Goals

It can be challenging to think how a course you take now will impact you in 4 years – but thinking about your career goals and future ambitions may help you narrow down your options. Remember that electives can enhance, support, or diversify your knowledge related to your major(s). Electives are also a great way to explore possible subjects and/or topics that you might use simply for personal development.

Support

Find out if there is extra support available for the courses you're considering. Carleton offers several academic support services for students in various disciplines. Check and see if the course is a PASS supported; if the department or faculty offers course specific support; and remember that you can always request a tutor through LSS' Tutor Referral Service (on Carleton Central) and access the Writing Tutorial Service (WTS) for extra help.