EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Fordham affirms the value of a core curriculum rooted in the liberal arts and sciences. The University seeks to foster in all its students life-long habits of careful observation, critical thinking, creativity, moral reflection and articulate expression. (From the Fordham University Mission Statement*.)*

Education for Intellectual Excellence

One purpose of the Fordham University liberal arts core is to enable students to go beyond mere proficiency and achieve a level of excellence in the essential skills of literacy. The first task of the student of the liberal arts is listening and observation for the sake of understanding. Such observation and listening is not, in essence, passive but rather a supremely active engagement of the mind in connection with ideas and people. Students of the liberal arts converse not only with those few who are present in the university halls and those who speak their own language but also with those in distant places, those who speak other languages, and those who are absent, perhaps even long dead.

Education for Freedom

Education in the liberal arts has traditionally been called "liberal" for several reasons, but among them is the fact that these arts engender the ability to form judgments based on sound reasoning, free of prejudice and free of insufficiently examined premises. Such critical and independent thinking demands knowledge of ourselves and the cultures that have shaped us. Learning to think, if pursued according to its most exacting standards and taken to its greatest depths, demands the actualization of our most distinctly human capacities, including the capacity for freedom. A liberal education prepares the student for a creative life, one capable of transforming its own conditions. In this regard, the liberal arts attempt to make learners aware of and aspirant to the greatness of the human.

Education for Others and Respect of Difference

A liberal arts education involves a community of learners. This community, committed to achieving excellence in the practice of the liberal arts, is composed of learners who depend on each other in a task that is too great for any one of them or even any one generation alone. This community of learners forms a republic of learning that transcends any one generation or nationality. The unifying principle of this republic is the preservation and advancement of the arts, the sciences, and wisdom.

The conversation in which Fordham's core engages its students aims to engender civility, that is, an attitude of respect and openness to the other and to the world. This respect is a foundational virtue both for the University and for modern pluralist societies: for the university because the intelligent conversation at the heart of education is not possible without it; and for pluralist societies because their civic life requires tolerance of differences. Acknowledging and understanding human difference is an intrinsic part of the perspective gained through learning in Fordham's humanistic Core Curriculum. It invites students to go beyond themselves and the familiar, to understand the world through the eyes of the other, and in so doing, helps prepare them for citizenship in pluralist societies and nourishes the quest for social justice.

Education for Leadership

The humanistically educated do not stand by as idle spectators of suffering and strife, but attempt to serve others and the communities to which they belong, that is, their families, their neighborhoods, their countries, and the world. Fordham as a community forms leaders and citizens in the midst of one of the world's capitals—New York City. Fordham and New York City share a common fate and collaborate in a mission of justice and human welfare that spans from their immediate neighborhoods to the globe.