Students with the talent and energy for working independently and with the strong support of two primary faculty sponsors may undertake a Contract Major: a coherent study of an interdisciplinary subject not covered by a regularly offered major. A Contract Major must be in an area suitable to the talents of the faculty in residence and cannot consist of modifications to an existing major. A Contract Major also must conform to the structure and have the coherence of a departmental or program major—it must embody a disciplined study that moves from an elementary to an advanced level and culminate in a synthesis similar to a senior major course.

Developing a Contract Major proposal is both interesting and demanding. Due to these demands, students should carefully consider the advantage of working within existing majors or programs, taking note of the considerable intellectual pleasures involved in sharing similar educational experiences with other students working within the same area of study. Students might also consider whether their interests could be met by any of the following combinations of regular offerings: two majors, a major and concentration, a major and coordinate program, a major and supplemental courses of special interest. Because the Contract Major represents an exceptional opportunity provided for students whose interests cannot be met through existing majors and programs, it cannot be pursued in conjunction with another major.

Students who wish to explore or propose a Contract Major should consult with the Contract Major Advisor (CMA) and with potential faculty sponsors as early as possible in the fall semester of the sophomore year.

Considerations

A Contract Major cannot be pursued in conjunction with another major or concentration.

Alternatives:
- two majors
- major + concentration
- major + coordinate program
- major + courses of special interest

Identification

A Contract Major is:
- A coherent study of an interdisciplinary subject not covered by a regularly offered major or concentration.
- A cumulative study that moves from an elementary to an advanced level.

A Contract Major cannot consist of minor modifications to an existing major or concentration.

Advising

Once you decide to pursue the Contract Major, schedule an appointment with Amanda Turner, Contract Major Advisor (CMA).

Process

Secure Faculty Sponsorship

Speak with at least two full-time faculty from different departments who:
- will be in residence during your junior/senior year,
- specialize in your areas of interest, and
- are willing to endorse your Contract Major proposal and undertake a central role in supervising its implementation, criticism, evaluation, and ultimate validation.

These two faculty sponsors will serve as your advisors. Faculty sponsors substitute for a major department and play a critical role in the Contract Major.

Schedule Advising Session

Prior to November 15, schedule an advising session with Amanda Turner, CMA.

Submit Contract Major Application

By November 15, submit the Contract Major application—this form declares your intent to officially pursue a Contract Major.
Develop a Written Proposal

In conjunction with your two faculty sponsors, develop a written proposal.

The proposal should include:

- Description of the proposed major area of study.
- Sound and persuasive rationale for proposing the Contract Major.
- Minimum of nine courses to complete the major: include brief course descriptions for your list of courses; courses must demonstrate a cumulative study that moves from an elementary to an advanced level (e.g. 200 to 300 to 400 level); one course must be designated a “Capstone” that will be taken senior year—this should be a 400-level course or an independent study.

When mapping out courses to complete the major, we understand that catalogs for future academic years are not available. Please make your best guess! Draw from the wide variety of courses taught in recent years and take into account leave patterns for faculty you may want to work with.

Please note, rules governing course grades and grade point average apply for entry into and continuation in a Contract Major.

Submit First Draft of Proposal

By February 15, completed first draft of your proposal is due to Amanda Turner, CMA, for review.

Submit Final Proposal

By March 15, submit to Amanda Turner, CMA:

- Final proposal
- If you are proposing to transform an existing coordinate program into a Contract Major, the chair of that program should submit a statement attesting to the validity of the proposal.
- Online endorsement forms from both faculty sponsors.

Important—there will be no extensions and no exceptions to this deadline!

Faculty Sponsors

Students pursuing a Contract Major must be highly motivated, possess the ability to work independently, and have the support of two faculty sponsors.

Sponsors must be willing to undertake a central role in supervising the proposed major’s implementation, criticism, evaluation, and ultimate validation.

By March 15, faculty sponsors must submit an endorsement of the student and their proposal.

Approval

The Committee on Educational Affairs (CEA) reviews and approves Contract Major requests.

Amanda Turner, CMA, will submit to the CEA:

- written proposal
- current academic progress report
- faculty sponsors’ endorsement forms
- other relevant materials, if applicable

The CEA, after consultation with relevant departments and programs, will vote on individual proposals and notify students and their sponsors before the spring registration deadline. In making its decisions, the CEA considers the student’s academic record, the coherence and feasibility of the plan of study, the degree of support expressed by faculty sponsors, and if appropriate, chairs.

Progression

Once approved, during the fall of junior and senior years, Contract Majors should be in touch with both faculty sponsors and Amanda Turner, CMA, about courses they are taking and general progress in the major.

Because catalogs are not available to accurately predict course progression at the time the Contract Major proposal is submitted, the expectation is that substitutions will occur.

Changes in the courses originally proposed for junior and senior years need to be approved by both faculty sponsors and the CMA.

The CMA will then forward the student’s written request along with endorsements from both faculty sponsors to the CEA for approval.
Honors Requirements

The route to a degree with honors in the Contract Major is a senior thesis.

A Contract Major thesis, which is determined in consultation with faculty advisors, is either:

- 10 semester courses: one semester thesis + one Winter Study thesis, or
- 11 semester courses: two semester thesis + one Winter Study thesis.

A solid record of honors caliber work, defined as maintaining a B+ average in Contract Major courses.

Honors Admission

Contract Majors who intend to write a thesis, and will be studying away spring semester, should submit their intention in proposal form, to both faculty sponsors and Amanda Turner, CMA, by November 15 of junior year.

Otherwise, proposals are due April 15 of junior year.

Admissions to honors depends on assessment by both faculty sponsors, the CMA, and the CEA of the

- qualification of the student, and
- feasibility of the project.

Upon admission, select three faculty readers (at least one should be a faculty sponsor) in consultation with the CMA. These readers determine highest honors, honors, or no honors.

Honors Candidacy

Contract Majors pursuing honors should submit a draft of their thesis to their three readers by January 15. The readers shall determine prior to the start of spring semester of senior year whether the student can continue as an honors candidate.

Final thesis is due April 15.

After the thesis has been completed, the work is publicly presented and readers determine highest honors, honors, or no honors.

CMAJ 493 (F) Senior Thesis: Contract Major

Contract Major senior thesis.

Class Format: independent study

Extra Info: this is part of a full-year thesis (493-494)

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2018

HON Section: 01 TBA Amanda B. Turner

CMAJ 494 (S) Senior Thesis: Contract Major

Contract Major senior thesis.

Class Format: independent study

Extra Info: this is part of a full-year thesis (493-494)

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2019

HON Section: 01 TBA Amanda B. Turner

CMAJ 497 (F) Independent Study: Contract Major

Contract Major independent study. An independent study petition is required, please see reigrar.williams.edu for more information.

Class Format: independent study
CMAJ 498 (S) Independent Study: Contract Major

Contract Major independent study. An independent study petition is required, please see registrar.williams.edu for more information.

Class Format: independent study

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2019

IND Section: 01  TBA  Amanda B. Turner