



*John Wesley Honors College is an intentional learning community established to model and enrich IWU's commitment to a Christian liberal arts education that nurtures lived wisdom. We thus strive for redemptive excellence by preparing our graduates to discern and inhabit God's truth, to grow into the liberating virtues of Christ's goodness, and to embody the sanctifying beauty of God's reconciling love in a hurting world.*

### **What is a Christian Liberal Arts Education?**

The most basic aspiration of the JWHC mission is for our community to exist as fertile ground for cultivating liberal arts learning. But what is liberal arts learning? We live in an era in which “liberal” is most familiar to Americans as a political adjective—cast as an aspersion by some and embraced with pride by others. The term however has a much longer history among the western traditions of education. Since at least the time of Plato, a “liberal” education has been a course of learning that *liberates* students *from* ignorance, delusion, and vice *so that they can inhabit* truth, goodness, and beauty as the essence of their lives.

This educational notion of “liberal” operates out of the following convictions:

- (1) humans pursue more meaningful lives and flourish as they become more grounded in what is genuinely *real*;
- (2) truth, goodness, and beauty are the overlapping ways that humans seek to make sense of *reality* and envision how to live according to the logic of what is *real*;
- (3) humans typically settle for false and delusional visions of truth, goodness, and beauty which undermine their understanding of reality and, accordingly, their efforts to pursue meaningful, flourishing lives;
- (4) the most important task of education therefore is to *liberate* human beings from false conceptions of reality by immersing them in a way of life that genuinely embodies truth, goodness, and beauty.

While all liberal arts learning aims for this kind of liberating education, the precise character of this endeavor is ultimately determined by a community's shared assumptions about what reality is and how human beings flourish within it. In other words, a liberal arts education is never neutral about what “truth” is, what pursuits may be described as “good,” and what phenomena

are deemed “beautiful.” Every liberal arts learning community develops its curriculum and educational outcomes based on the plot and logic of the particular narration of reality its members—whether consciously or not—trust as the most reliable way to make sense of the world.

The shared vision of reality that animates our liberal arts learning community is the tradition of lived wisdom handed down within the historic Body of Christ. And so, we grapple with complex questions of *truth* according to a narration of reality that begins and ends with a Triune God who created this world for human beings to share in His transcendent life and love. We cultivate lives of *goodness* that embody the virtues of Christ’s new humanity. And we contemplate the mystery and allure of *beauty* attentive to how God’s life-giving presence in creation inspires, nurtures, and completes our flourishing as relational creatures.

In an age in which higher education values occupational training more highly than the formation of meaningful lives, we stand in awe of how the Lord has directed and prospered the JWHC’s commitment to Christian liberal arts learning. And we relish in the opportunity to welcome students into an educational journey that can transform how they see and live into the realities of God’s world. JWHC students major in a broad variety of disciplines and they graduate into successes in every possible profession; but they do so equipped by their Christian liberal arts education to steward their everyday lives according to the redemptive power of God’s truth, goodness, and beauty.