

**CSUN**<sup>®</sup>CALIFORNIA  
STATE UNIVERSITY  
NORTHRIDGE

MASTER OF ARTS IN

# HUMANITIES



In today's constantly evolving work environments, employers are increasingly seeking employees who are flexible enough to apply a broad set of conceptual skills in ways that can meet the unique and ever-changing needs of their organizations. In this program, participants interact online while learning to:

- think more logically,
- communicate clearly and effectively,
- analyze and synthesize problems, and
- respond appropriately to challenges of any kind.

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## CSUN's Master of Arts in Humanities

This masters degree was designed to focus on an exploration of some of the essential questions that have had significant influence in shaping our shared national and international experience for most of the 20th and the 21st century. Essential questions such as:

- What is justice?
- What defines a good life?
- What is culture and how does it shape who we are?
- What is the ideal human condition?
- What role does power play in shaping the human condition?
- What are the limits of freedom?

Because the program is designed around such essential questions, it focuses throughout on developing program participants advanced conceptual skills and higher order reasoning. These advanced habits of mind are both fundamental pathways to deeper and broader understanding of academic disciplines and fields of professional practice and required skills for senior roles in most professional in contemporary context. Indeed when employers are asked what they are looking for in senior professionals in the contemporary working world, most often what they talk about are conceptual skills – the skills that allow an individual to analyze changing situations, to raise the right questions that reveal potential challenges and opportunities, to innovate, to reason from multiple perspective, to understand and value diversity in all forms, and to lead with breadth of vision and care for others.

*“Are there universal human values? How would we recognize them? How would we test their claim to universality? Why would we want to know?”*

*– Sheena Malhotra, Ph.D.  
Identity, Meaning and Culture (HUMA 600)*



## Program Benefits

### **Develops critical-thinking and problem-solving skills**

Through CSUN's 20-month, fully online Humanities program, participants discover how critical thinking, discussion and reflection on humankind's "big ideas" can prepare them for more holistic and fulfilling lives in virtually any profession, societal role, or area of interest. Those who successfully complete this program will also be attractive to today's employers who increasingly value team members who know how to think creatively, understand different points of view, and synthesize information in ways that lead to solutions that are both innovative and highly effective.

### **Cultivates an understanding of core concepts**

Students learn to identify the thought processes and values that not only underlie historical and cultural events but also influence decision-making and behaviors in a wide range of contemporary contexts, from personal and societal to global and commercial.

### **Develops advanced, professionally focused communication skills**

The ability to present information clearly and engagingly to a range of audiences is an essential skill for anyone who has knowledge to share and a desire to communicate with others, whether as an educator, executive or advocate for any organization, community or cause. Through guided, analytical discussions, participants learn how to "frame" conversations and present ideas clearly, succinctly and persuasively.

### **Instills cultural knowledge and appreciation**

Today, almost every environment is multicultural. To function effectively in their workplaces and elsewhere, working professionals need to develop an appreciation of how cultural differences in social conventions, expectations and values may affect their interactions with others. In this program, this appreciation is achieved primarily through assigned readings of the works of great thinkers from a wide range of cultures, beliefs and times, followed by group discussions of their applicability to today's personal, professional and creative challenges.



## Program Benefits *(continued)*

### **Prepares graduates for careers, professional advancement and personal re-invention in the new global economy**

In today's constantly evolving work environments, employers are increasingly seeking employees who are flexible enough to apply a broad set of conceptual skills in ways that can meet the unique and ever-changing needs of their organizations.

Moreover, because most of today's working adults will switch careers during their lives, CSUN's online Master of Arts in Humanities program is crafted to enable students to develop habits of mind that will facilitate lifelong intellectual exploration, agility and adaptability.

### **Encourages the development and expansion of participants' personal interests and preferred modes of expression**

Students share their interests through regular assignments and discussions. The program's online format supports an unusually high level of shared honesty, which results in stimulating discussions of assigned topics. This format also gives students time to reflect on course content and shape their insights before sharing them with fellow learners for feedback and further inspiration.

### **Empowers growth in education**

Many K-12 teachers, find this program to be an attractive option for earning their master's degree and career advancement. This degree has special value for teachers because the approach demonstrates instructional strategies that foster independent inquiry and the cultivation of conceptual skills. This program offers teachers the opportunity to broaden and refine their own skills and knowledge base while simultaneously opening the door to new avenues which enhance their approach to course development.

As a result, their students are better prepared for success in higher education and their professional lives. For those teachers who believe that a crucial part of their role is to prepare the next generations to be engaged and reflective citizens in our evolving, multicultural democracy, the advanced study of the Humanities offered in this program is of exceptional value.



*“People who engage in a profound way with a broad range of disciplines – including, and in some cases especially, with the humanities – are preparing to engage the challenges of life. They are creative and flexible thinkers; they acquire the habits of mind needed to find solutions to important problems; they can even appreciate the value of making mistakes and changing their minds. I am convinced that this kind of study is not merely defensible but critical to our national welfare.”*

*– William D. Adams, chairman,  
National Endowment for the  
Humanities*

## CSUN: A Leader in Online Graduate Education

CSUN is a vibrant, diverse community that encourages students to combine academic pursuits with hands-on experience. All CSUN online programs are increasingly recognized nationally for their excellence. They are crafted by the same distinguished faculty and leading practitioners as CSUN's on-campus programs and are held to the same high standards of academic excellence and student achievement.

CSUN's award-winning online programs are a result of a strong collaboration between faculty, instructional design, and technical professionals. This partnership ensures that the online educational experience creates an engaged learning community and provides flexibility for managing how the program fits into demanding personal and professional lives. Each online degree has a specific design approach and is driven by the unique requirements, needs and goals for the program. This leads to content, design and evaluation that align with the student outcomes required of that particular degree of study.

Faculty receive individualized training and ongoing support to ensure smooth and effective use of online educational technology. Our professional distance-learning staff also provides training and start-to-finish technical support to students in online degree programs. Education-technology specialists assigned to each online program and cohort develop strong working relationships with those enrolled, so that students soon discover that their support comes from people on the CSUN campus dedicated to helping them succeed – and not just a virtual “help desk”.



*“The goal should be that everybody gets a chance to read great books and participate in the richness that humanities brings us.”*

*– Bill Gates, Founder, Former Chief Executive and Chairman, Microsoft*

## Advantages of the Carefully Crafted Curriculum

CSUN's Master of Arts in Humanities features a carefully crafted curriculum, specifically designed to meet the academic growth and career development needs of working professionals. The interdisciplinarity of the classes allow students flexibility and depth as they tackle the big questions in the humanities.

Listed in the order of presentation, the following courses are purposefully sequenced to ensure that later courses build on earlier ones to provide a powerful, cumulative learning experience and a fully integrated program of study.

### **COURSE LIST** (11 courses, 33 units)

**HUMA 501:** Gateway to the Humanities

**HUMA 510:** The Sacred: What Is It? What Makes Us Seek It?

**HUMA 520:** Self: Body and Mind: Who Are You? How Do You Know?

**HUMA 530:** Family and Life Cycles: The Nature of Connections Among Individuals

**HUMA 600:** Identity, Meaning and Culture

**HUMA 610:** Space, Place and Geography: How Where (We Think) We Are Defines Who We Are

**HUMA 630:** Nation and Empire, Law and Government

**HUMA 620:** Science and Magic: The Varied Modes of Knowing and Believing

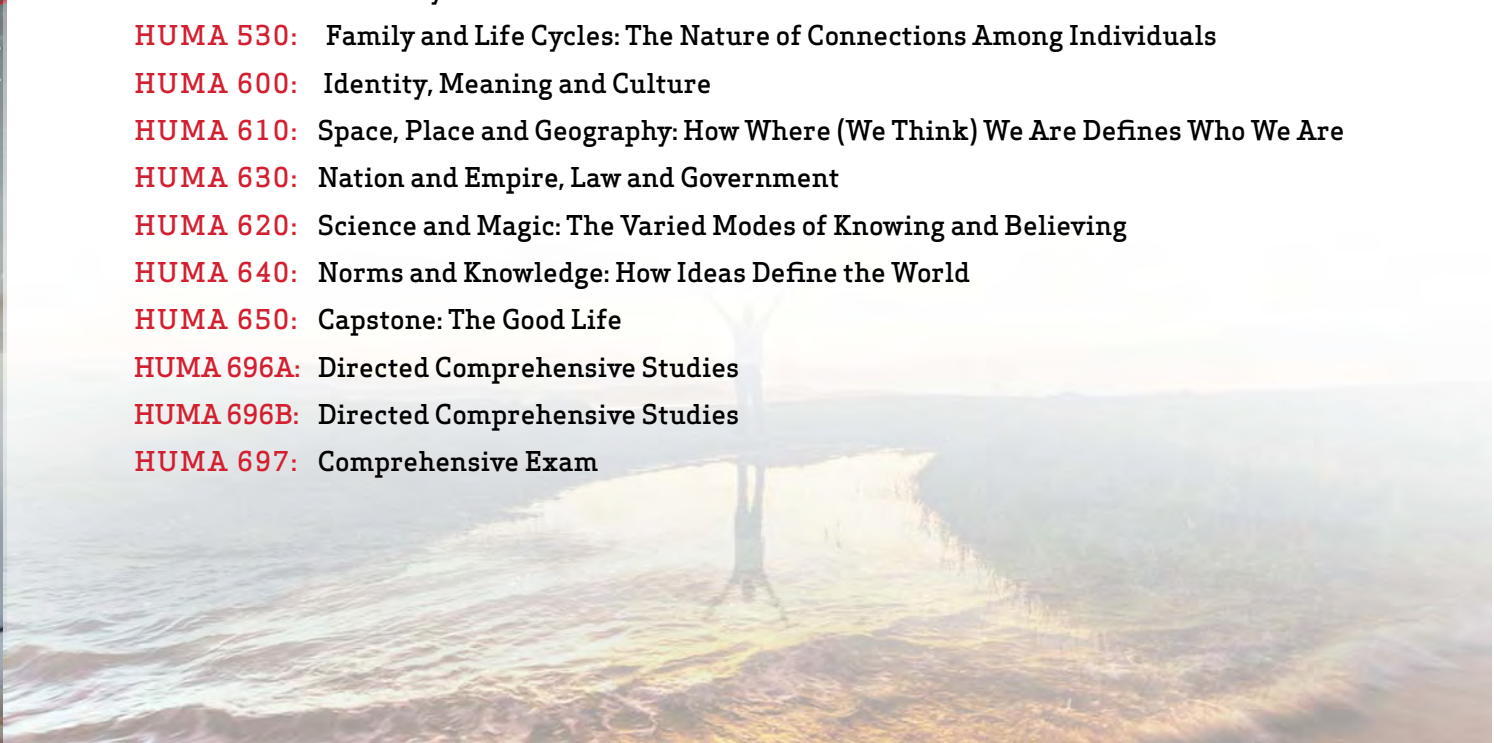
**HUMA 640:** Norms and Knowledge: How Ideas Define the World

**HUMA 650:** Capstone: The Good Life

**HUMA 696A:** Directed Comprehensive Studies

**HUMA 696B:** Directed Comprehensive Studies

**HUMA 697:** Comprehensive Exam



## Course Highlights

### **HUMA 501: Gateway to the Humanities**

This course provides an advanced-level overview of the humanities and the diverse foundations of our shared intellectual heritage. Through analytic reading and guided discussion, participants explore the disciplinary knowledge, modes of inquiry and core ideas of the humanities.

Participants also learn how each discipline within the humanities is defined, how various traditions of study and reflection allow essential ideas to shape lives and modes of thought, and how the traditions within the humanities have evolved across time and cultures.

### **HUMA 510: The Sacred: What Is It? What Makes Us Seek It?**

This course examines and critiques the notion of the "sacred" in different cultural contexts and from distinct and varied perspectives, including those of writers such as Mary Daly, William James, Carl Jung and Paul Tillich. Participants investigate historical and cross-cultural efforts to institutionalize the sacred through symbols, myths, rituals and physical spaces that influence people's lives and choices. The course also examines two conflicting present-day trends: namely, efforts to recover a more authentic sacred by cutting loose from institutional religion versus efforts to use institutional religion as a foundation for revolutionary social change. Both trends are influencing political and cultural contexts within and across national boundaries today in ways that are important for all who live and work in the interconnected global economy to understand.

### **HUMA 520: Self: Body and Mind: Who Are You? How Do You Know?**

Across all cultures, beliefs and times, people have grappled with the nature of human existence. The dilemma of being both finite and conscious presents a wide range of challenges that have occupied the thoughts of philosophers, theologians, writers, social theorists and others. This course introduces participants to the history of ideas that focus on the study of ourselves, our bodies and our minds – from the writings of René Descartes to Sigmund Freud to Michel Foucault and beyond. Participants will consider different cultural conceptualizations of body and mind as well as the changing ways we perceive the relationship between these two fundamental and intricately connected aspects of the self.

### **HUMA 530: Family and Life Cycles: The Nature of Connections Among Individuals**

Through the lenses of literature, art, philosophy, history and popular culture, participants explore the nature and place of family and the human life cycle in the individual's formation of a sense of self, an identity, personal values and an understanding of life's purpose across different cultural traditions. The course will also examine the extent to which these aspects of our humanity are cultural constructs that vary according to historical time and geographic location. Participants read and discuss the ideas of Stephanie Coontz, Emile Durkheim and Friedrich Engels, among others, and study portrayals of families in fiction, poetry and film.

### **HUMA 600: Identity, Meaning and Culture**

Culture produces ideas, and ideas are the foundation of power, purpose, and the struggle for control. Indeed, the major conflicts among civilizations – right up to the 20th and 21st centuries – have been most often rooted in clashes of ideas and the ideologies they engender. Considering and examining cultures as structures built of contending ideas that both influence and are influenced by historical contingencies allows participants to build an understanding of how culture creates meaning and shapes how we see the world and act in it. Drawing on the ideas of a wide range of thinkers – such as Theodor Adorno, Sigmund Freud, Henry Louis Gates, Arundhati Roy and Edward Said – this course also considers excerpts from literature, films and studies of various cultures and ethnic groups.

### **HUMA 610: Space, Place and Geography: How Where (We Think) We Are Defines Who We Are**

This course explores how conceptualizations of space and place have contributed to different cultural understandings of the human condition. From Dante Alighieri's 14th-century epic poem, "The Divine Comedy," to films such as "The Matrix," and contemporary novels by William Gibson ("Neuromancer") and Salman Rushdie ("Shalimar the Clown"), as well as to "virtual worlds," such as Second Life, this course looks at the concepts underlying the creation and representation of space and the role of landscape/environment in determining the human condition. Participants also carefully analyze and reflect on the ways that differing ideas about space, place and the use and control of land have led to conflicts within and between societies.



### **HUMA 630: Nation and Empire, Law and Government**

This course examines the formation of the modern nation-state and focuses in particular on how these states are constructed, represented and understood through art, literature and philosophical critique. Within the past century, shifts in national boundaries, conflicts between ethnic heritage and national identity, and struggles between nations for resources and control have affected and continue to affect countless millions of lives. Course participants will critically evaluate the influence of the modern nation-state on other societies with particular attention to colonialism, imperialism, patriotism and globalization. The course concludes with a discussion of precursors, successors and alternatives to the nation-state, based on readings from historic thinkers such as Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke to more contemporary analysts, including Eduardo Galeano, Clifford Geertz and Edward Said.

### **HUMA 620: Science and Magic: The Varied Modes of Knowing and Believing**

This course focuses on the distinctions in different times and cultures between what is defined as "science" and what is seen as "magic." It rigorously traces such thinking from as far back as written text permits and looks to the observations and analyses of contemporary thinkers and writers who examine such boundaries. Participants consider the different modes of human inquiry and discovery as well as the interplay between knowing and believing. Throughout today's world, we find conflict between modes of knowing based on belief and modes of knowing linked to contemporary scientific methods of inquiry and evidence. Participants also explore how such divisions

originate and operate within and across cultures and how such apparently rigid and divisive boundaries can shift in both cultural and individual contexts.

### **HUMA 640: Norms and Knowledge: How Ideas Define the World**

This course delves into knowledge, norms and values (i.e., the nature of epistemologies) as they are represented in philosophy, literature, religion and cultural studies. Using texts from René Descartes, Robert Borofsky, Michel Foucault, Carol Gilligan and others, participants closely examine the development and transformation of these norms across time and between cultures, as well as through different forms of representation. The purpose of this exploration is to discover and appreciate how knowledge is not only defined and constructed but also characterized, configured and reconfigured by social groups, institutions and individual thinkers, including artists.

### **HUMA 650: Capstone: The Good Life**

The program's final course has its foundation in Socrates' most famous dictum: "The unexamined life is not worth living." Participants will both draw on the preceding courses and consider new readings to develop a thoughtfully conceived description of what constitutes a good life. Using readings from great historical philosophers (e.g., Aristotle, Plato, Confucius, and Nietzsche) as well as the works of more modern literary figures (e.g., William Blake, William Butler Yeats, Bertolt Brecht, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Zadie Smith, and Arundhati Roy), participants investigate and reflect on the following questions: How do we know what it is to be a good person or to lead a good life? Why do notions of what constitutes a good life seem to vary so much across time and

cultures? Why is this seemingly essential notion so elusive when carefully considered? What effect does this elusiveness have on how each of us chooses to live? The emphasis will be on the role (s) that particular worldviews (especially those identified by the participants as their own) play in shaping both what we deem to be the good life and the means that each of us considers appropriate for its attainment.

### **HUMA 696A: Directed Comprehensive Studies**

HUMA 696A prepares students to write their final comprehensive exams as well as to meet the writing requirements of the program. The comprehensive exam itself (HUMA 697) is completed during the semester in which students complete all of the requirements for the degree. (Credit/No Credit only)

### **HUMA 696B: Directed Comprehensive Studies**

HUMA 696B prepares students to write their final comprehensive exams as well as to meet the writing requirements of the program. The comprehensive exam itself (HUMA 697) is completed during the semester in which students complete all of the requirements for the degree. (Credit/No Credit only)

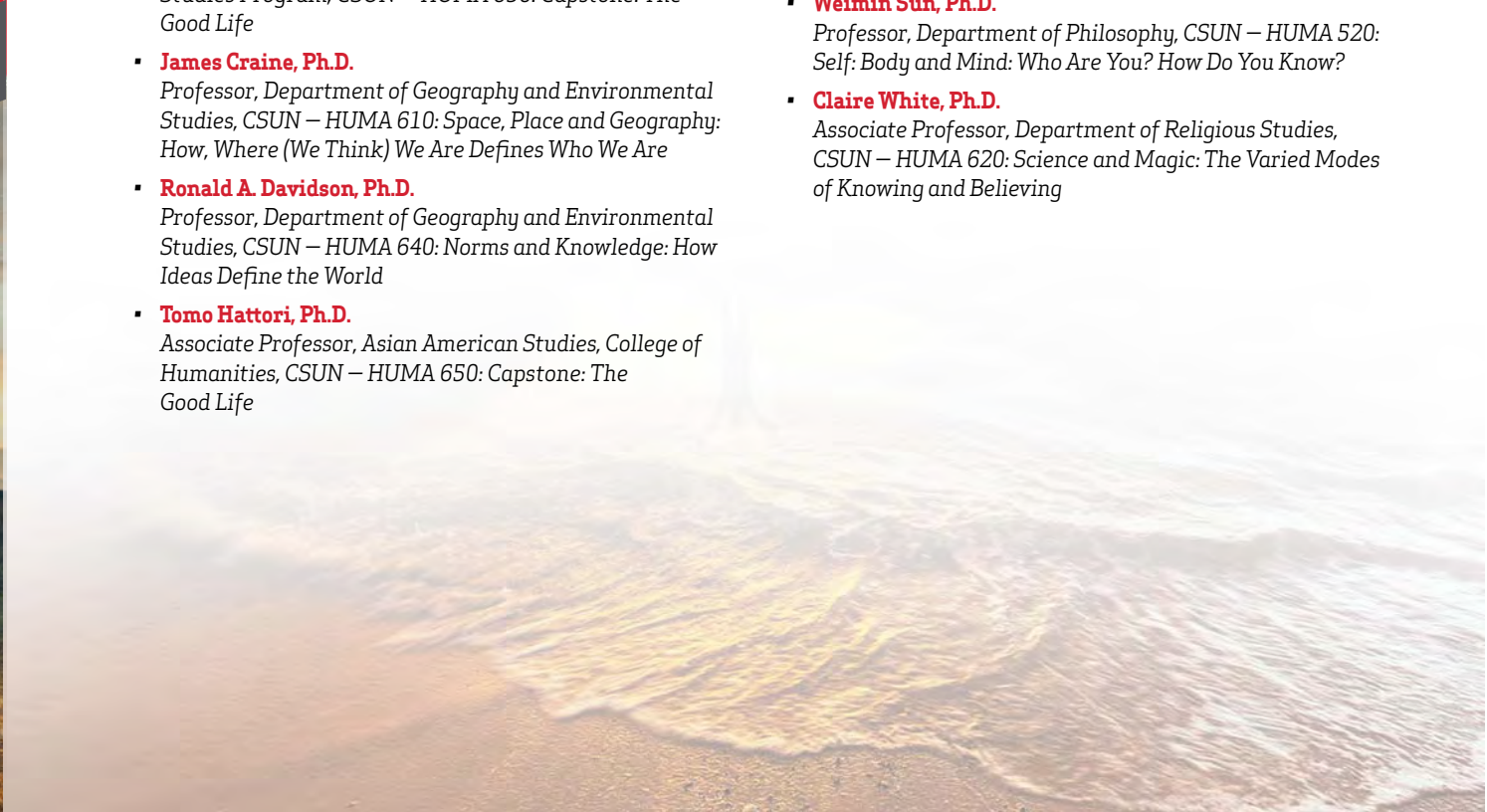
### **HUMA Comprehensive Exam**

Prerequisite: Graduate standing. Comprehensives are completed during or following the semester in which students complete all of the requirements for the degree. Here, students will work toward the completion of the comprehensive experience, which will be developed with the teaching faculty. (Credit/No Credit only)

## Distinguished Faculty

Distinguished faculty work to deliver content with real-world relevancy. Faculty bios can be read on the [Faculty webpage](#).

- **Xochitl Alvizo, Ph.D**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies, CSUN – HUM 510: *The Sacred: What is it? What Makes Us Seek It?*
- **Aimee Carrillo Rowe, Ph.D., MFA**  
Professor, Department of Communication Studies, CSUN – HUMA 600: *Identity, Meaning and Culture*; HUMA 696: *Directed Comprehensive Studies*; HUMA 697: *Comprehensive Exam*
- **Ranita Chatterjee, Ph.D.**  
Professor, Department of English, and Director, Liberal Studies Program, CSUN – HUMA 650: *Capstone: The Good Life*
- **James Craine, Ph.D.**  
Professor, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, CSUN – HUMA 610: *Space, Place and Geography: How, Where (We Think) We Are Defines Who We Are*
- **Ronald A. Davidson, Ph.D.**  
Professor, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, CSUN – HUMA 640: *Norms and Knowledge: How Ideas Define the World*
- **Tomo Hattori, Ph.D.**  
Associate Professor, Asian American Studies, College of Humanities, CSUN – HUMA 650: *Capstone: The Good Life*
- **Krystal Howard, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Professor, Liberal Studies Program, College of Humanities, CSUN – HUMA 530: *Family and Life Cycle*
- **Edward L. Jackiewicz, Ph.D.**  
Professor and Chair, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, CSUN – HUMA 630: *Nation, Empire, Law and Government*
- **Sheena Malhotra, Ph.D.**  
Professor, Gender and Women's Studies, Director, Queer Studies, Academic Lead, M.A. Humanities, CSUN – HUMA 600: *Identity, Meaning and Culture*
- **Weimin Sun, Ph.D.**  
Professor, Department of Philosophy, CSUN – HUMA 520: *Self: Body and Mind: Who Are You? How Do You Know?*
- **Claire White, Ph.D.**  
Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, CSUN – HUMA 620: *Science and Magic: The Varied Modes of Knowing and Believing*



## The Advantages of CSUN's Approach to Supporting the Educational Success of Working Professionals

At CSUN, we recognize the work-related constraints of midcareer professionals. Starting a new degree is a big step, but for you, the working adult, the pay-off is the program's completion. So, to get you there on time, with a diploma in hand, we offer a range of support services rare among public universities.

An assigned program coordinator will work with you from the time you apply to the time you graduate. This practice delivers ongoing, direct personal support from a real-world contact to guide you through the program without long lines or red tape. Coordinators play a proactive, hands-on part in the cohort experience by offering continuing information, regular reminders and steady, reliable encouragement.

CSUN's degree programs also assign you an academic lead, who coordinates the program's faculty and responds to questions beyond the scope of individual courses. Participants often develop close working relationships with their assigned leads. When you face an academic challenge, or hit a roadblock in your timetable, this person will steer you back on course. With this approach, CSUN graduate programs proudly achieve eighty-five to ninety-plus percent graduation rates.

*"It's been widely reported that many of the best jobs of tomorrow don't even exist today, so the successful colleges of the future will be those that graduate students who have the imagination to figure things out."*

*– Jeffery Selingo, editorial director, The Chronicle of Higher Learning*



## Admission to the Humanities Program

To be admitted to the program, applicants must possess (at the time of enrollment):

- **Educational Background:** Bachelor's degree in any major from a regionally accredited institution.
- **Cumulative GPA:** Have at least a 2.5 grade point average in the last 60 semester/90 quarter units attempted, independent of when the baccalaureate degree was granted.
- **English Proficiency Requirements**  
*For Non-U.S. Degree and International Students Only*  
If a graduate applicant has earned a bachelor's or master's degree from a college or university outside the U.S., then an English language proficiency exam may be required.

For more information, please visit [Admission Requirements](#) web page.

### Accreditation

California State University, Northridge is accredited by the Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities for the Western Association of Schools (WASC), an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council on Higher Education and Accreditation.

For More Information

(818) 273-6877

[programs@csun.edu](mailto:programs@csun.edu)

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