

BA IN VALUE STUDIES

In October 2009, ECLA introduced a new 4-year programme leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree. Students who complete the programme receive a BA in Value Studies and concentrate in two of the following three areas:

Art and Aesthetics
Ethics and Political Theory
Literature and Rhetoric

This is the first degree programme worldwide to be structured around the concept of value. In current academia, the fundamental types of value, and the questions and concerns which attend them, are separated out into several departments. Too often, the result is that the most important questions we expect academia to address are lost in the pursuit of specialized training. ECLA, in contrast, is a college without departments, where the different norms, claims and ideals we live by, and the different forms of theoretical work they inspire, are brought together in a single programme of study. Throughout the four years, students work with academics from different backgrounds on moral, political, epistemic, religious, and aesthetic questions, with the understanding that such questions are naturally and deeply connected. The programme is designed for students who want to combine their pursuit of special interests with a demanding *studium generale* and serious reflection on the meaning of education.

It takes four years to complete the programme. Students spend the first two years at ECLA dividing their time between common core courses and foundational studies in their areas of concentration. The third year is arranged for each student individually according to his or her interests, and will normally be spent studying or working somewhere else in the world. Students finish their degrees back in Berlin with a year structured around a research project supervised by one or two of the ECLA faculty members.

While it is designed to provide a very high level of general education, the ECLA degree programme is an especially good preparation for continued study in fields such as philosophy, literature, political theory, and art history. The ECLA degree also provides excellent support for students interested in careers in politics, organizational work, public policy, law, journalism, or the art world. Since 2002, graduates from ECLA's one-year programmes have already gone on to work successfully in all of these areas. To read about their experiences visit the [alumni section](#) on our website.

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1. WHAT WILL I LEARN IN THE PROGRAMME?

To this question there are three closely connected answers:

1A. COMMON CORE COURSES

Some questions concerning art, politics, morality and knowledge have a claim on everyone's attention. No matter what our special interests are, or what we do for a living, they are worth asking and deserve serious thought. Each term ECLA students spend half of their time in a 'core course' devoted to such 'common questions' addressed through the close study of texts and works of art that have shaped, or seek to shape, the values we live by.

An ECLA core course is always co-taught by 2-6 faculty members, and a number of guest teachers; coming from different academic disciplines or backgrounds, they all bring their special expertise and general knowledge to bear on the common questions of the term. Questions and texts for each core course are chosen by ECLA faculty. These choices are the results of ongoing conversations, collective deliberation and sometimes heated debate. Accordingly, the core courses are 'live' creatures, revised each year, and sometimes replaced. This means that the list of BA core courses may change but the principle remains: the core courses are devoted to questions regarded fundamental by ECLA faculty, and to the books and works of art they consider most essential for a solid and relevant general education.

The core courses are designed to ensure that - in the course of the programme - students familiarize themselves with questions that touch on all the different forms of value, with texts from different periods, and with different approaches to the study of values.

1B. AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

In each stage of the programme, the student is expected to pursue one (or more) of his or her special interests. In the first two years students choose two areas of concentration in which they do foundational work in a year-long course. This first part of the programme culminates with a substantial piece of work relating the different domains of study to be submitted at the end of the second year. The third year is arranged entirely in the light of the students' individual interests, although not necessarily related to the two areas of concentration chosen for the first two years. The programme ends with a supervised research project in year 4 where the student works for the entire year in depth on a topic of his or her special interest.

1C. APPROACHES

ECLA students are introduced to several approaches to the study of values. Each has its own focus, questions and modes of inquiry. It is a part of ECLA's educational philosophy to recognize a plurality of approaches, all legitimate in some manner, and to emphasize the importance of appreciating differences and debates between them. All students will, in the course of their first two years at ECLA, take at least one course in each of five categories:

Concepts

Periods/Places

Books, Authors or Authors in dialogue

Disciplines, or methods associated with a discipline

Genres/Styles.

2. HOW IS THE TEACHING ORGANIZED?

The BA programme is based on three teaching formats.

2A. SEMINARS

Since the 19th century the word 'seminar' has been used (first in German, then in English) to refer to a small group of students meeting to discuss some subject or other with their teacher. This is how the word is used at ECLA. The normal size of an ECLA seminar is 5-10 students, and the number is never higher than 15. A seminar is run by a faculty member, but in a manner that relies on active participation from students. The ultimate aim of a seminar is the joint exploration of some common object or question.

2B. TUTORIALS

A 'tutor' is a teacher who gives private instruction to a single student, and a 'tutorial' refers to the period of private instruction. All ECLA courses involve tutorials in which teacher and student discuss, one-to-one, an essay written by the student. On average students write one essay per week, and tutorials last at least half an hour, often more.

2C. LECTURES

At ECLA the lecture format is used less than in most places, and used differently. First, each lecture is followed by an extensive discussion period. Second, lectures are used almost exclusively in co-taught core courses, i.e. courses taught by several ECLA faculty together. The lecture will be given by one faculty member or guest teacher, but other faculty will be present too and participate in the discussion afterwards. ECLA students, accordingly, will often see their teachers in discussion. The frequent exposure to discussion between faculty who come from different backgrounds, represent different

approaches to the study of values, and defend very different substantial views, is an integral part of the programme.

Students should expect to spend 12-18 hours in the class-room per week during term.

3. PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Courses are arranged in modules according to German accreditation standards. The credits are calculated according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The programme consists of 240 credits, which are distributed as follows:

CORE MODULE A – 30 CREDITS
 CORE MODULE B – 30 CREDITS
 CORE MODULE C – 20 CREDITS
 CONCENTRATION MODULE A - 15 CREDITS
 CONCENTRATION MODULE B - 15 CREDITS
 ELECTIVE MODULES – 40 CREDITS
 THIRD YEAR MODULE – 60 CREDITS
 PROJECT MODULE – 30 CREDITS

YEAR 1	Core Module A	Concentration Module A	Elective Module
Term 1	Plato's <i>Republic</i> and its Interlocutors	Concentration Seminar A1	Elective 1
Term 2	Forms of <i>Love</i> : Eros, Agape and Philia	Concentration Seminar A2	Elective 2
Term 3	Values of the <i>Florentine Renaissance</i>	Concentration Seminar A3	Elective 3
YEAR 2	Core Module B	Concentration Module B	
Term 1	The Idea of Character	Concentration Seminar B1	Elective 4
Term 2	Reason, Faith & Scepticism	Concentration Seminar B2	Elective 5
Term 3	Property	Concentration Seminar B3	Elective 6
YEAR 3	Students spend the third year of the programme studying or working somewhere else in the world.		
YEAR 4	Core Module C	Project Module	
Term 1	The Idea of Objectivity 1	Project Preparation 1	Elective 7
Term 2	The Idea of Objectivity 2	Project Preparation 2	Elective 8
Term 3	Research Seminars	Project Writing	Period

4. YEARS 1-2

4A. CORE COURSES: ANCIENT AND MODERN VALUES

In the 17th century, French and English thinkers debated vigorously whether 'ancient' or 'modern' literature should be considered superior. Descartes and other writers had already undermined the ancient authority of Aristotle in the field of science, and now Homer was no longer automatically

considered supreme in the field of literature. These debates, now known as the 'quarrel between ancients and moderns', which eventually included all fields of learning and domains of human concern, have become emblematic for fundamental and general value debates concerning the significance of tradition and the possibility of progress. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that every value discussion today is touched by related issues: discussions about politics, ethics, knowledge, art, literature and language all have their progressives and conservatives, or their moderns and ancients. Taking our cue from this extant historical debate the first year core of ECLA's degree programme is loosely focused on questions, texts and discussions before and in the 17th century; the second year is loosely focused on questions, texts and discussions in and after the 17th century. In both years we focus on questions about how, if in any sense, are our values 'modern'? What values did we leave behind as 'pre-modern', 'medieval' or 'ancient'? Do we ever really 'leave values behind'? Where do 'new' values come from? Are 'ancient' and 'modern' values really different? In what sense, if any, can we claim to be better off now, know more, or live in the light of finer values? Because we focus on these questions first and foremost, the chronological ordering between the two years represents no particular historical claim or preference; it is motivated by pedagogical concerns only and we freely break with this order, whenever chronology or pedagogy indicates that we should. In other words, we focus in both years on questions, texts and discussions which still influence, or are relevant for, our *current* dialogues about values.

4B. CORE ELECTIVES

Each second year core course has a conceptual focus, but is also complemented with *core electives* that allow students to pursue the topic of the term further in ways that are not primarily conceptual. Students choose one of these each term. Core electives normally represent one of the five approaches listed in section [1c](#).

4C. CONCENTRATION SEMINARS

All first and second year students choose an area of concentration for the year. The options are:

Art and Aesthetics

Ethics and Political Theory

Literature and Rhetoric

In the chosen area students take a prescribed course each term. These 'concentration seminars' constitute foundational studies in the chosen area of concentration. All students choose a new area of concentration for their second year, and so end up having taken six concentration seminars.

4D. ELECTIVES

The area of concentration is also pursued beyond the concentration seminars. Each term students choose an elective course, and some of these will be relevant for the area of concentration. In each

area of concentration students must choose three relevant electives in the course of the programme. It is also possible to take electives that do not fall in one's area of concentration.

5. YEAR 3

Students spend the third year of the degree programme off campus. The standard available options are disciplinary training, language, and internships. The different options can be combined. Each student is required to do an internship at some stage within the programme. The distribution of credits is calculated on the basis of the student's individual plan for the year.

5A. DISCIPLINARY TRAINING

Students who are planning to go on to graduate school after completing their ECLA degree may wish to pursue disciplinary training in a relevant department somewhere during their third year. This option is also recommended for students who are interested in one particular disciplinary approach to Value Studies. ECLA's approach to Value Studies is not primarily disciplinary, but disciplines like philosophy, literature, art history, history, theology, sociology, and biology play an important role in the programme. ECLA helps with the relevant institutional contacts and practical arrangements.

5B. LANGUAGE

Students may also decide to study language (always in a country where it is (one of) the native language(s)) during their third year. ECLA helps students with relevant contacts and practical arrangements.

5C. INTERNSHIP

Each student is required to do an internship as part of the programme. Students who have a particular career in mind may wish to do an extended relevant internship in their third year. ECLA helps students find relevant internships.

6. YEAR 4

Why do we desire to know and understand? Which fundamental ideals guide, or should guide, our research – and why? How and why do we come to take an interest in some particular, limited field in which we strive for thorough understanding or expertise? How does one frame a research project? Do different objects force us to ask different questions? How and why do we choose some particular method or discipline as we approach what we are interested in? What is the value of originality, and how should one relate to an intellectual tradition in which relevant work has already been done on

one's chosen topic? What do we do with our expertise vis a vis laymen, and how do we, as laymen or generalists, relate to the superior knowledge of others? Does one's expertise shape one's character? Is there such a thing as a 'knowledge society', and how does it function? What is the vocation of a scholar? What is the public role, or moral responsibilities of 'intellectuals' – or the 'educated public'? These are some of the questions around which the fourth year of the BA is structured.

6A. INDIVIDUAL PROJECT

Students in their final year of the programme work on these issues both generally and vis a vis their own special research interests. The central component of the year is a year-long research project, arranged in the light of individual background, interests and plans for the future. The main task is to demarcate a field of interest and pursue it in depth, but students are also expected to reflect on their choice of focus and preferences of method, and to share their premises and findings with peers whose main interests will typically lie elsewhere. (This happens in the 3rd term *Research Seminars*.) The work is supervised by a member of the faculty and culminates with a 25-page research paper and an oral presentation of the project to the entire ECLA community.

6B. CORE COURSE

The course runs as a seminar for two terms and provides students with an occasion to study, reflect on and discuss one of the most fundamental and contested concepts in current debates about the normative foundations of the human pursuit of knowledge and understanding. For a detailed course description relying on the theme of 'Objectivity' and a possible syllabus, click [here](#).

6C. READING GROUPS

The aim of a Reading Group is to close read a book that might have been on the core syllabus, or that complements the syllabus in a fruitful way. Faculty are encouraged to offer reading groups that are relevant to many of the individual projects of the year; some reading groups, then, can then function as a bridge between the core course and some of the individual projects pursued by students in that year. Other reading groups will be devoted to classical works relevant for most students. Like the core course, all reading groups invite the students to reflect on the desire to know, methods (in the broadest sense of the word) and the ideals of research.

Each Reading Group meets for three hours a week for 5 weeks. Normally 2-3 Reading Groups will be offered for each 5-week period, and all PY students choose one.

6D. ELECTIVES

See section [4d](#).

7. REQUIREMENTS, ASSESSMENT, CREDITS

Completing the degree programme involves fulfilling three kinds of requirement:

7A. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

At ECLA most academic credits are given not for examinations passed, but for the daily work in class and for the essays written in the course of term. For that reason ECLA keeps track of attendance, and gives credit only to students who have been consistently present, well-prepared, and active in class during term. Students should expect to write, on average, an essay per week. Participation in class and essays are assessed with letter grades according to the ECTS grading system. Students receive several 'participation grades' and 'essay grades' in the course of term. Each grade has a certain 'weight' and the final grade for the course is cumulative. The GPA is generated as an average of all the final course grades received. In order to complete the programme students must pass all relevant courses (listed in the programme overview) with a GPA of C or higher.

7B. RESIDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

All B.A. students live on campus during term time for three years. In the first year they share a room with a fellow student from another country and whose native language is different. Second year students share a room with a fellow student according to their own choice (depending on availability). Students in the final year have a single room.

7C. LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

In order to complete the programme students must fulfil two language requirements. 1) All students must pass a B1 level German language examination before graduating. 2) All students must pass an examination in a language other than English, German and their native language.

7D. INTERNSHIP REQUIREMENT

Each student is required to do an internship, which is typically integrated in the third year of the programme. The duration varies according to the student's individual plan.

8. LINKS

[Application guidelines](#)
[Financial aid guidelines](#)
[Application Form](#)
[Financial Aid Form](#)

9. DISCLAIMER

The description of the degree programme presented above is subject to change.