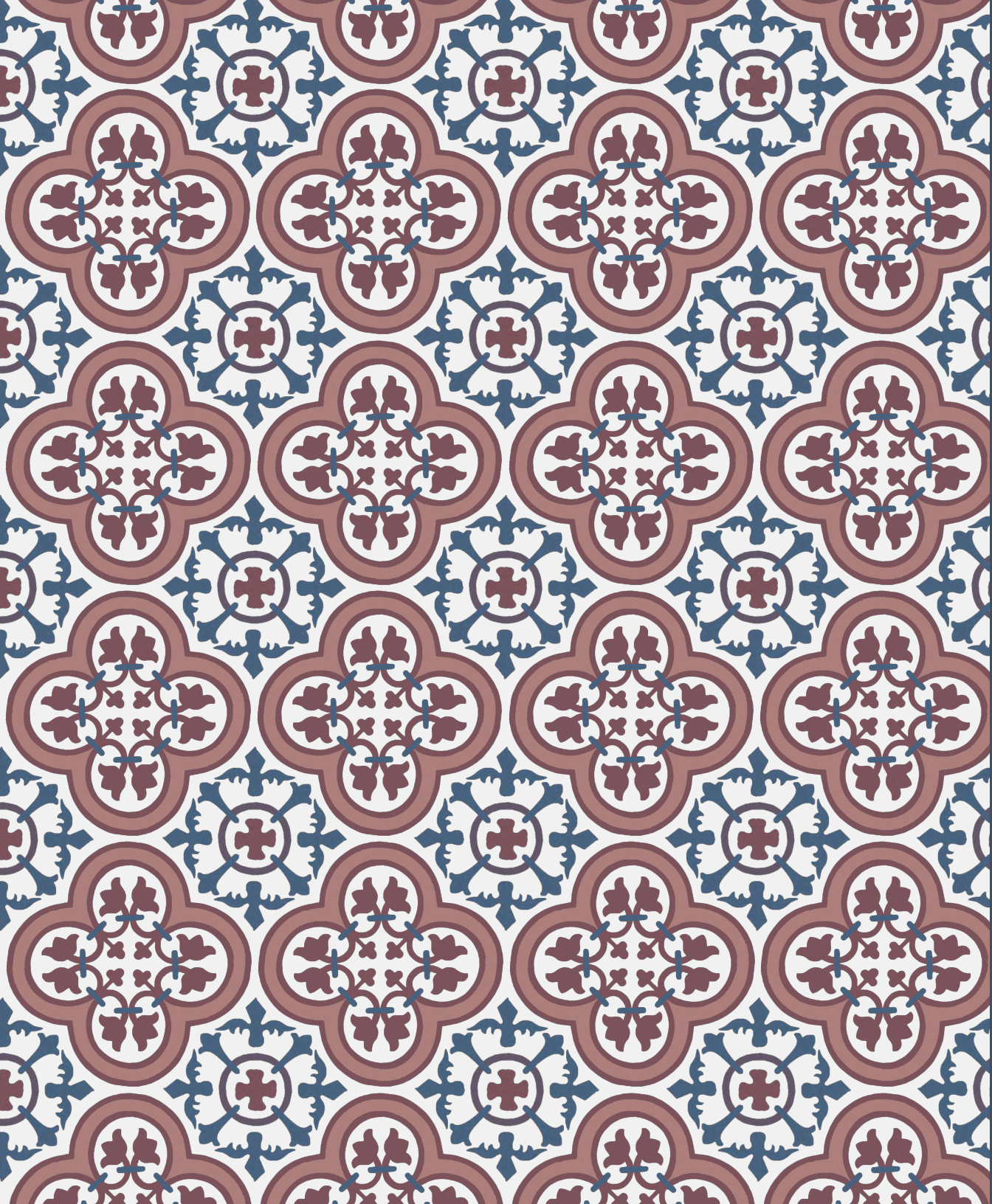


# THE THREE WAYS AN INTRODUCTION TO DWG





# THE THREE WAYS

## AN INTRODUCTION TO DWC

— Pilot Program, 2024-2025 —



PROVIDENCE  
COLLEGE

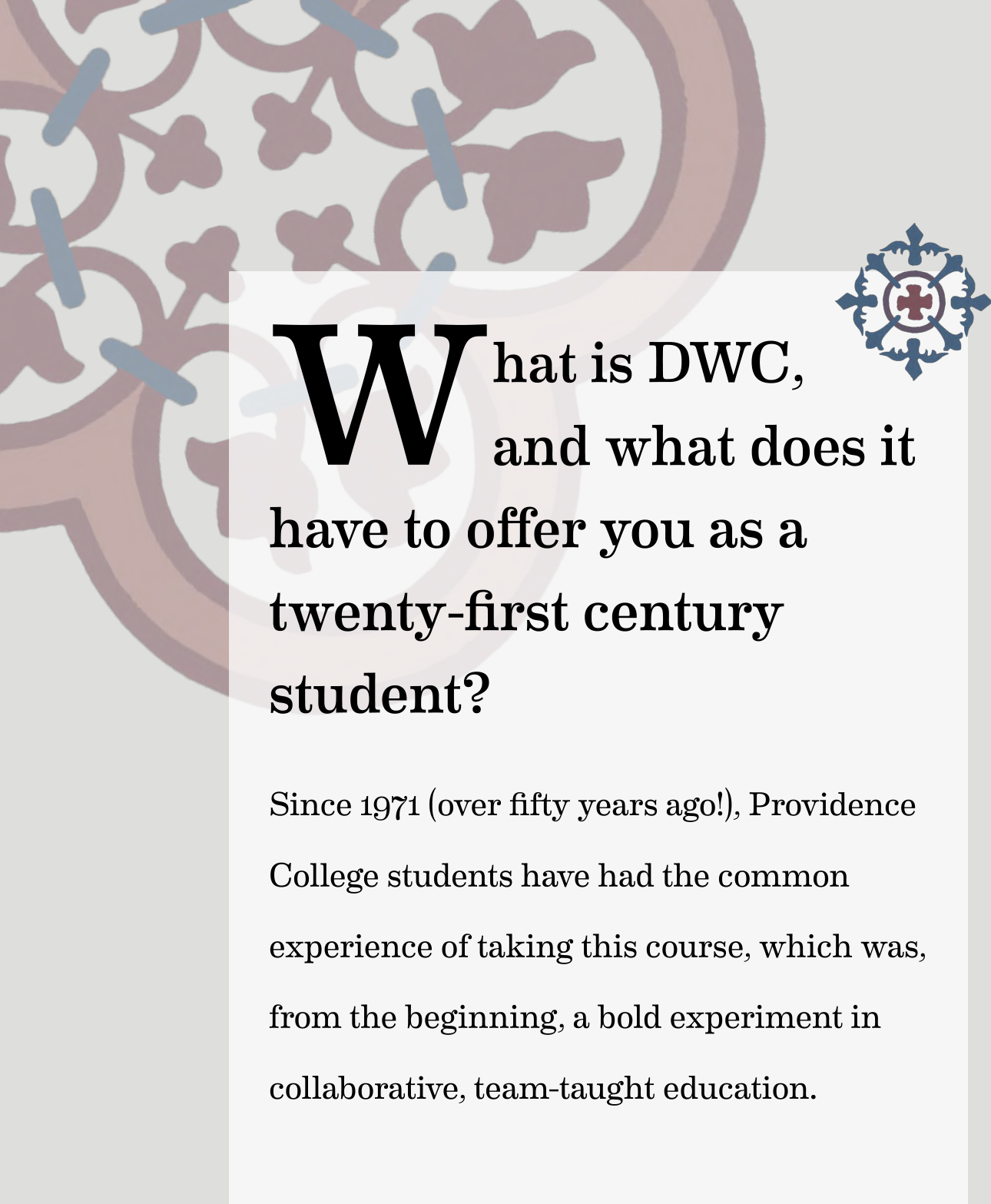


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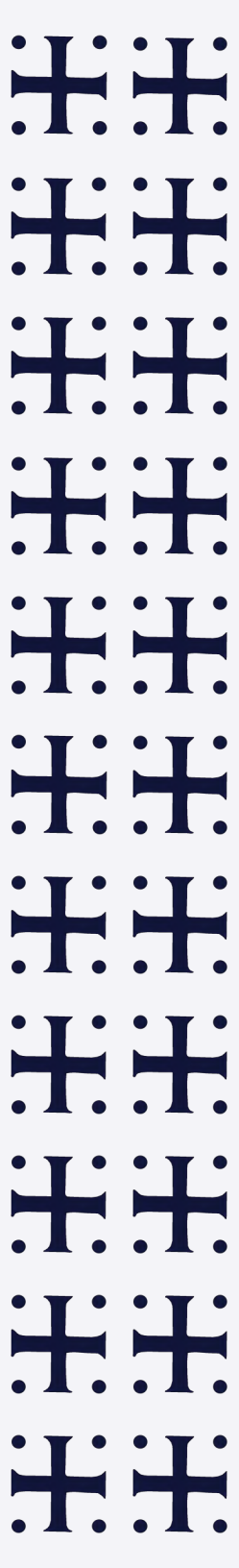


## The Bold Experiment



**W**hat is DWC,  
and what does it  
have to offer you as a  
twenty-first century  
student?

Since 1971 (over fifty years ago!), Providence College students have had the common experience of taking this course, which was, from the beginning, a bold experiment in collaborative, team-taught education.



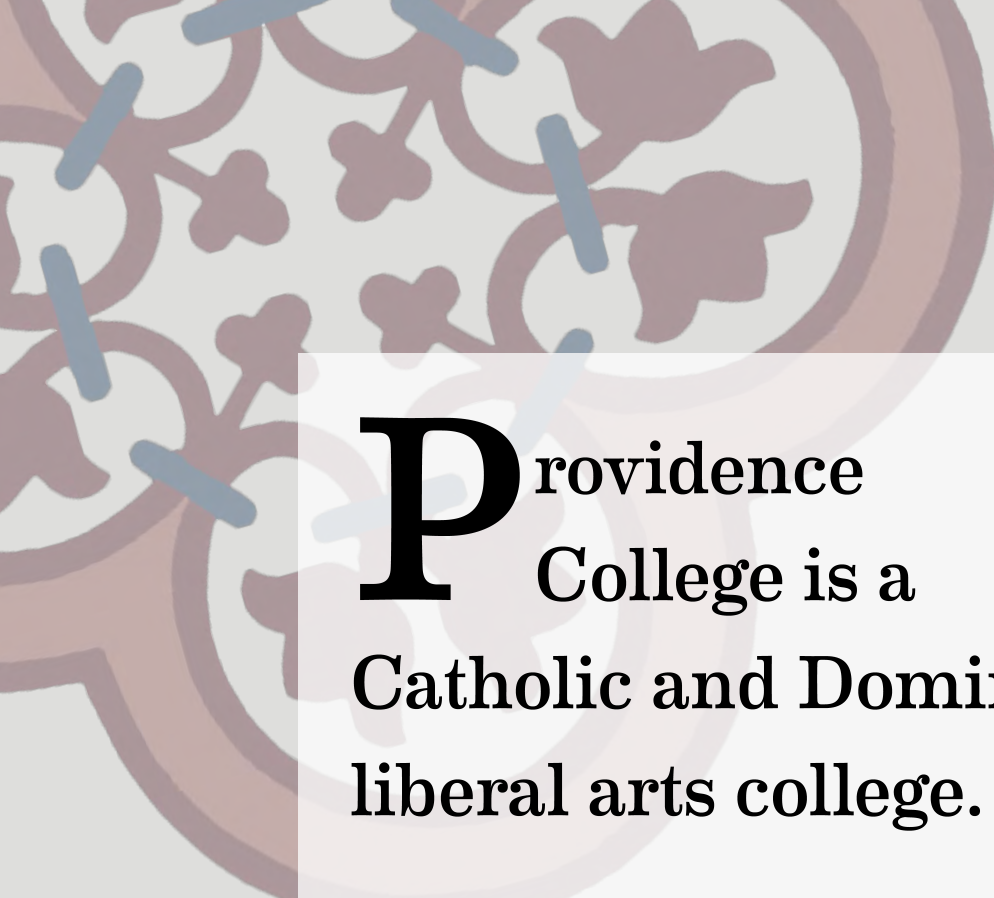
While DWC has been a cornerstone of the PC experience for decades, new students come to the course with important questions, like: what is DWC, what is it trying to achieve, and is it really worth it?

As you begin your college education, it is smart to ask questions like this. In this short booklet, our goal is to offer you a vision for DWC that can help you make sense of your journey through the program. The vision we will articulate here is part of a pilot program that is intended to help a new generation of students get the most out of their DWC experience. Certainly, “Civ” offers much more than what we discuss here, and different teams approach the course in different ways. Nevertheless, we hope this pilot program will help clarify shared goals for the course, that you will come away with a greater appreciation for DWC, and that you will understand why it is foundational to your PC liberal arts education.



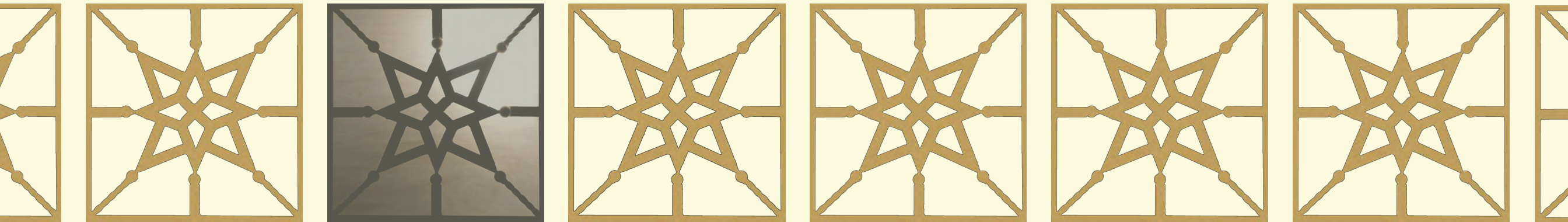


## **At the Heart of the 'Liberating Arts'**



**P**rovidence College is a Catholic and Dominican liberal arts college.

This is a distinctive identity, and it gives rise to a unique core curriculum. It is often said that, at Providence College, DWC is the “core of the core”—it provides a common orientation and foundation for the various areas of specialization you’ll pursue in your majors and minors.



The goal of PC's common curriculum is to offer students the skills and habits of mind characteristic of a liberally educated person, and DWC is the gateway into the school's liberal arts core.<sup>1</sup>

Many colleges and universities identify themselves as "liberal arts" institutions, but it's not always clear what that label signifies. The liberal arts are an approach to educating that has developed over thousands of years. But the words "liberal" and "arts" have a meaning that is somewhat different from their everyday connotation today, so to understand this approach to education, we should start by looking closely at each word.

The word "liberal" is from the Latin word *liber*, which means "free." Of all the capacities that the human

being has, few are more extraordinary than our freedom. Freedom is a powerful force. When used well, it grows and expands, making the person ever more free and drawing others into the way of liberation. Yet it is also clear that one's "freedom" can be misused when human beings act in ways that bring unhappiness to themselves and others. Given the stakes, the liberal arts tradition has seen the gift of freedom as an awesome power that brings great responsibility. The second word, "arts," comes from the Latin *ars*. In this context, the word "arts" means a skill, a craft, or a practice. Thus the "liberal arts" are a training in the craft, or the skill, of true freedom.

To the modern ear, the phrase "liberating arts" may help to capture the true goals of this course of study.



One scholar recently said that the liberating arts are a way of life, the crafts or practices by which we live out the freedom that makes us flourish as human beings. This way of life ought to cultivate in us a spirit of liberality and a communal desire to mend a tattered world, to seek justice for our neighbor, and to heal social divisions. In short, the liberal arts must liberate or they are mere semblances of wisdom masquerading as the real thing.<sup>2</sup>

A “liberal arts” education offers human beings, who are made for freedom, the skills needed to use that freedom to its greatest potential. Therefore, when we speak of “liberal arts,” we speak of a tradition of educating for freedom.

While PC shares much in common with other top liberal arts colleges, it is also quite unique. Part of our distinctive identity comes from the fact that we are the only Catholic liberal arts college in America that is administered by the Dominican Friars, a religious order that has been recognized

for its spiritual, intellectual, and cultural achievements since their founding in 1216. As a PC student, you will take advantage of an education that is innovative and modern, but also nourished by an 800-year tradition of academic excellence. Thus, PC incorporates insights into how to pursue an education for freedom that emerge from the Catholic and Dominican tradition.

The “Civ” sequence consists of four courses. The first three represent a chronological sequence that begins in the ancient past and arrives at... you, today, in the modern world. Each class is taught by three professors reflecting the disciplines of History, Classics, Literature, Philosophy, and Theology, and each class features two fifty-minute lectures, and one hour-and-fifty-minute seminar each week. To give you a sense of the “scope” of each of the three chronological classes, here’s a taste of what you might expect.



### — DWC 101 —

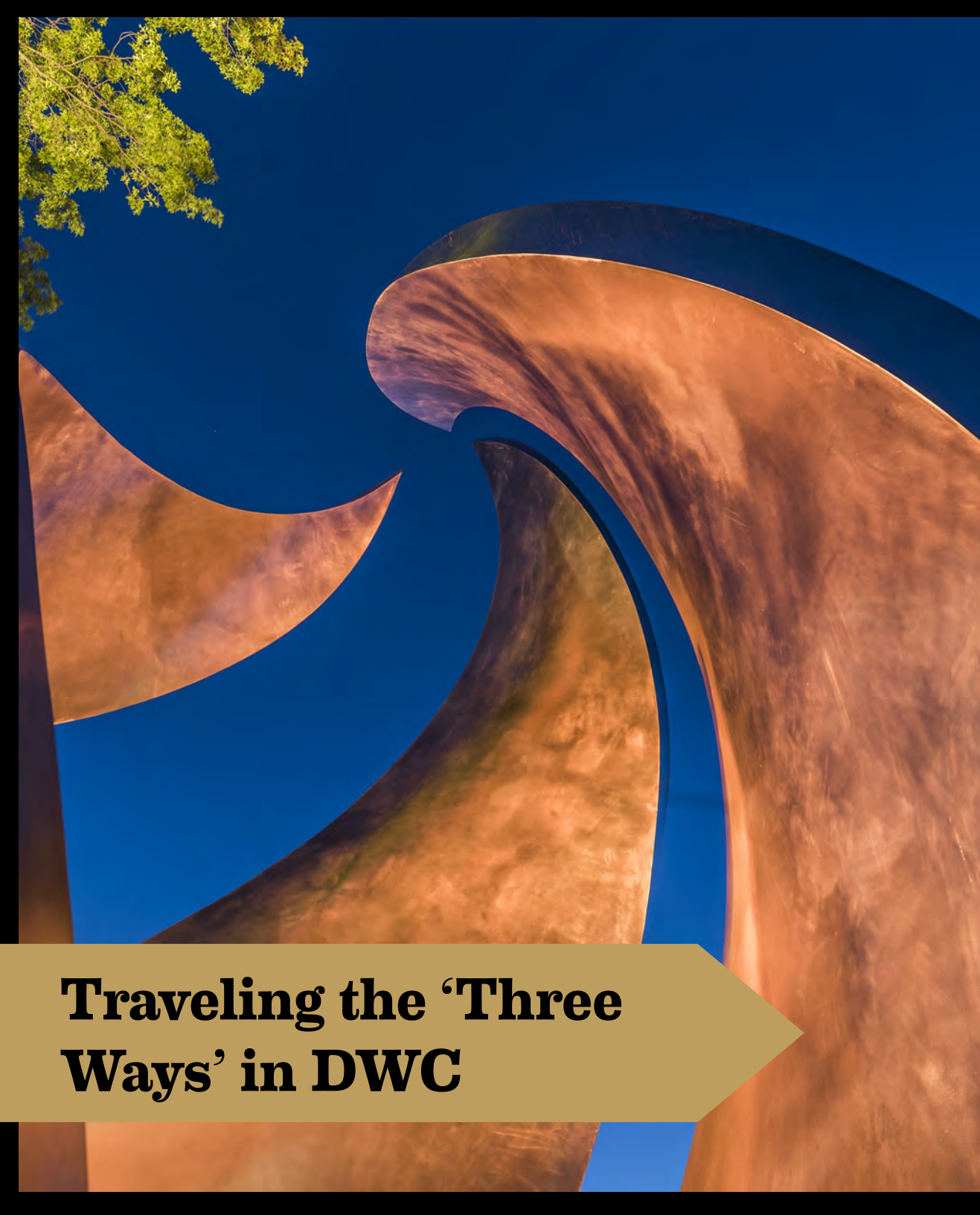
stretches back to the earliest texts of the ancient Near East, including the Hebrew Bible, and explores major milestones in Greek and Roman classical antiquity, before concluding in the early Christian era.

### — DWC 102 —

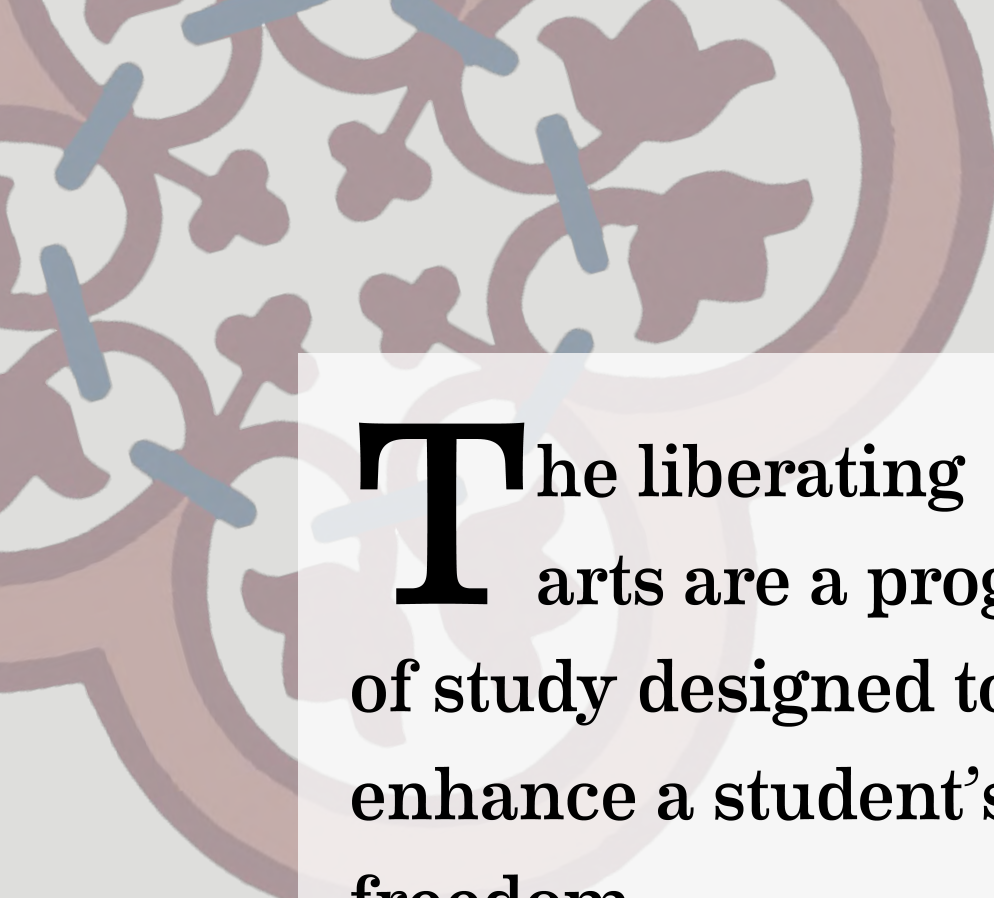
includes over 1,000 years of history, from the rise of Islam and the early Middle Ages, to the “high Middle Ages”—when the Dominican order was founded by St. Dominic—through the Renaissance, and up to the early Modern period.

### — DWC 201 —

typically begins at the time of the American and French Revolutions and explores a wide range of important texts written in the 19th and 20th centuries, from across the West and around the world, and concludes with the important questions that continue to shape us today.



## Traveling the ‘Three Ways’ in DWC



**T**he liberating arts are a program of study designed to enhance a student’s freedom.

Over the centuries, liberal arts educators have sought to empower students to use their freedom well. They have especially emphasized understanding the words of others and expressing oneself effectively in a variety of contexts.



A student is brought into the circle of the liberal arts. Each of the seven traditional arts are represented (Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, and Music), and Wisdom presides over the gathering. Sandro Botticelli (1468).

At the foundation of this approach to education was the *trivium*, or “the three ways,” which the ancient Greeks identified as grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. By focusing on these three paths, known as the “arts of language,” the tradition has sought to equip students

with the tools necessary to think and communicate in the pursuit of freedom.

While the ideas we are presenting in this booklet are connected to the ancient tradition, they are also developed and expanded with both DWC and the modern student in mind. Thus, instead of using the ancient Greek terms, we’ll explore the “three ways” using these headings: remembering, thinking, and communicating. As a kind of shorthand, you might associate these three “arts” with the first three semesters of “Civ”: DWC 101 will primarily focus on the practices associated with “remembering,” DWC 102 will primarily focus on the practices associated with “thinking,” and DWC 201 will primarily focus on the practices associated with “communicating.”

Admittedly, this is an oversimplification: you’ll be building all three skills in each class, but by highlighting a particular skill each semester, you and your professors will be able to better focus on concrete goals.

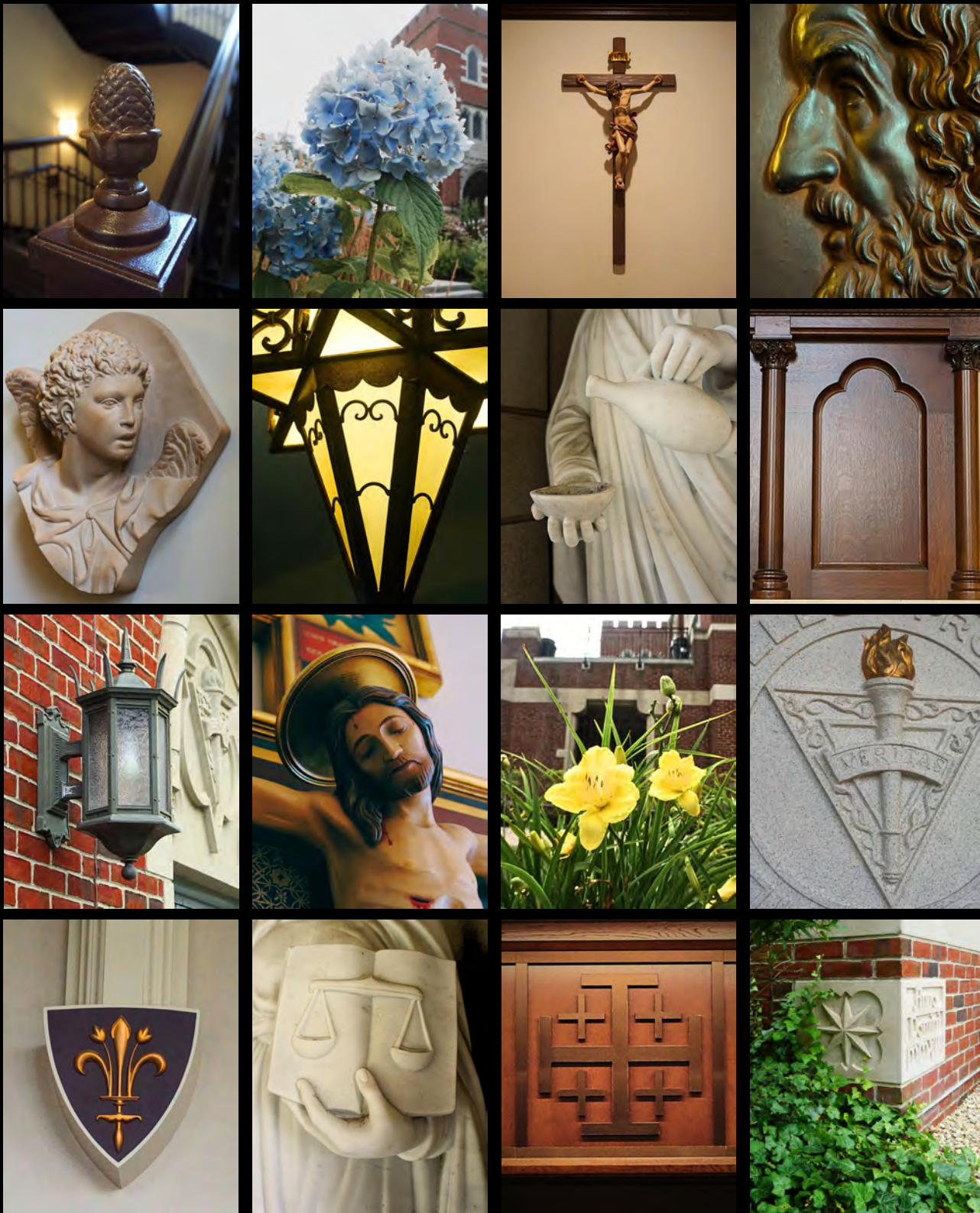
Let’s look more closely at the three “ways” and how they relate to DWC.



The first art focuses on “remembering” the traditions that provide “the building blocks for a conversation between past, present, and future.”<sup>3</sup> Through stories, songs, myths, poems, histories, scriptures, and many other sources, we receive traditions that help to orient our understanding. The art of remembering establishes a foundation, the most basic ideas and principles that are needed to join a conversation. An important part of telling stories is receiving stories, discovering the story(s) one finds oneself in, and learning how to advance or transform that story effectively. Thus, with “remembering,” we discover the power of words, we practice using words to express our thoughts and feelings, we receive the great stories that have built our world, and we learn the patient practices of focused attention and thoughtful understanding.

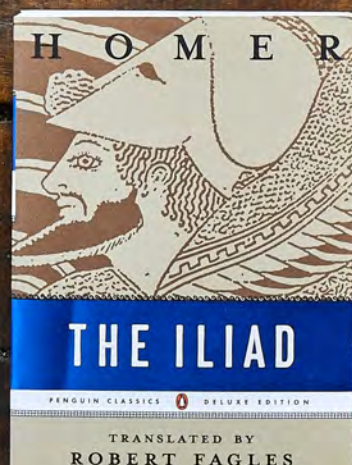
The texts you will be reading in DWC 101 introduce the major topics and





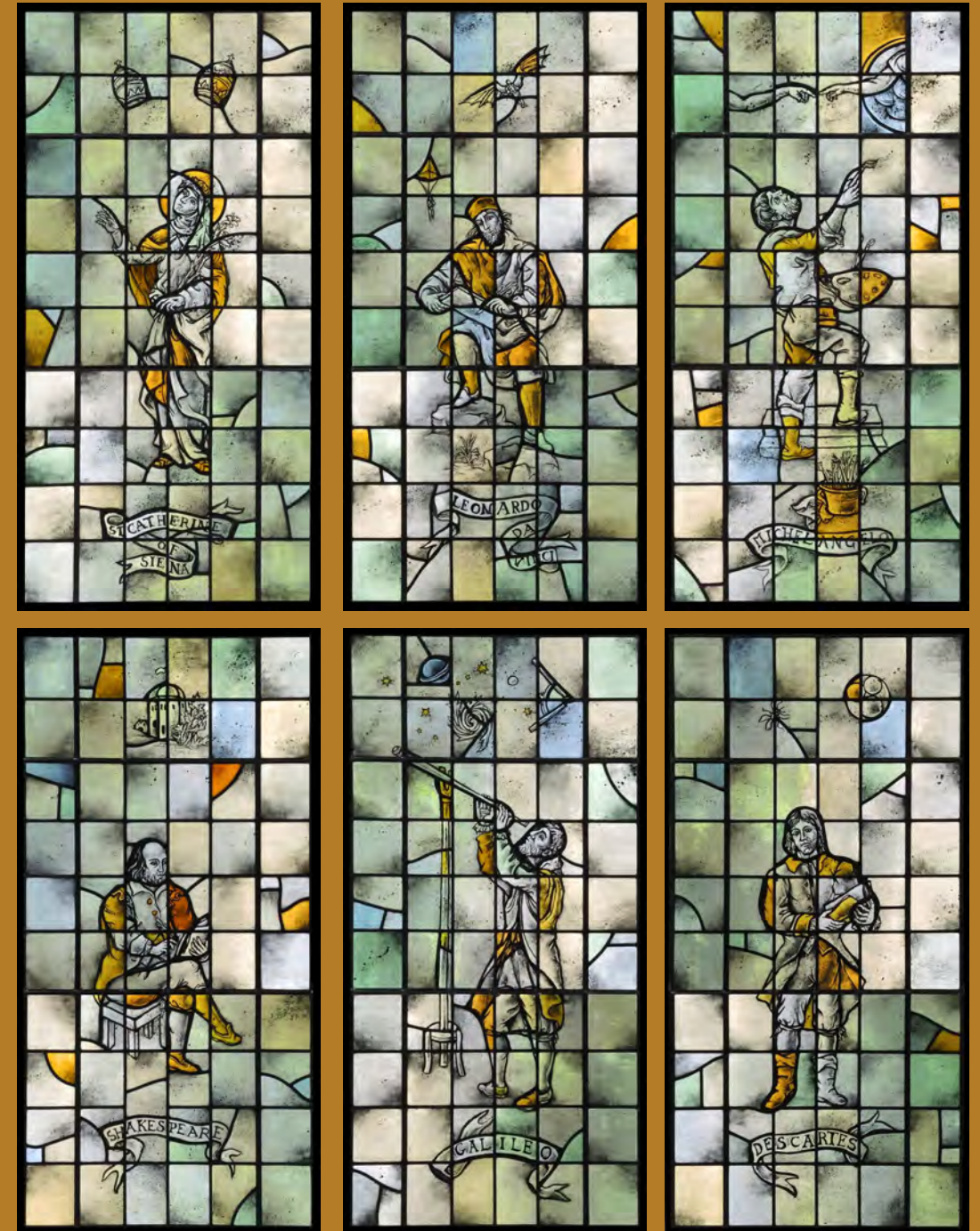
questions that continue to inspire and challenge us today. Important themes include justice, friendship, theism, virtue, freedom, faith and reason, political order, and love. These themes will weave their way through the entire course. Thus, as you approach DWC 101, consider it an opportunity to lay strong foundations as you encounter ancient stories and ideas that continue to shape the world today.

In DWC 101, you'll especially focus on the essential academic reading skills needed to excel in college and beyond. It takes some coaching, and a lot of practice, to learn how to read texts "closely," and many students aren't used to the kind of deep reading necessary to engage the texts in this course. In DWC 101, we'll focus on that skill, helping you develop the art of comprehending, summarizing, and retaining the key ideas in challenging texts. Along the way, we'll review the art of good notetaking, reinforce the principles of successful collegiate writing, and learn the secrets to effective communication in seminar. Perhaps these sound like basic skills, but they're extremely important. We're certain that this focus on "remembering" the foundations will benefit you throughout your college career.





Receiving from a tradition, learning the stories and ideas that shape a world, is a powerful gift, but it's far from the entire goal. While remembering is good, understanding is also crucial. The second "skill" in the liberating arts was named "dialectic," which brings together the skills of dialogue and critical thinking. It is a dialogue because this "art" is a conversational skill that involves exploring difficult questions together. Thus, one way to see the Western tradition is as an ongoing conversation where the most important and difficult issues we face as human beings are considered by people from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and social classes who are in extended dialogue with each other. In DWC, you'll also encounter many extraordinary voices who were excluded from the conversation in their day, but who nevertheless made a lasting impact and who came to captivate later





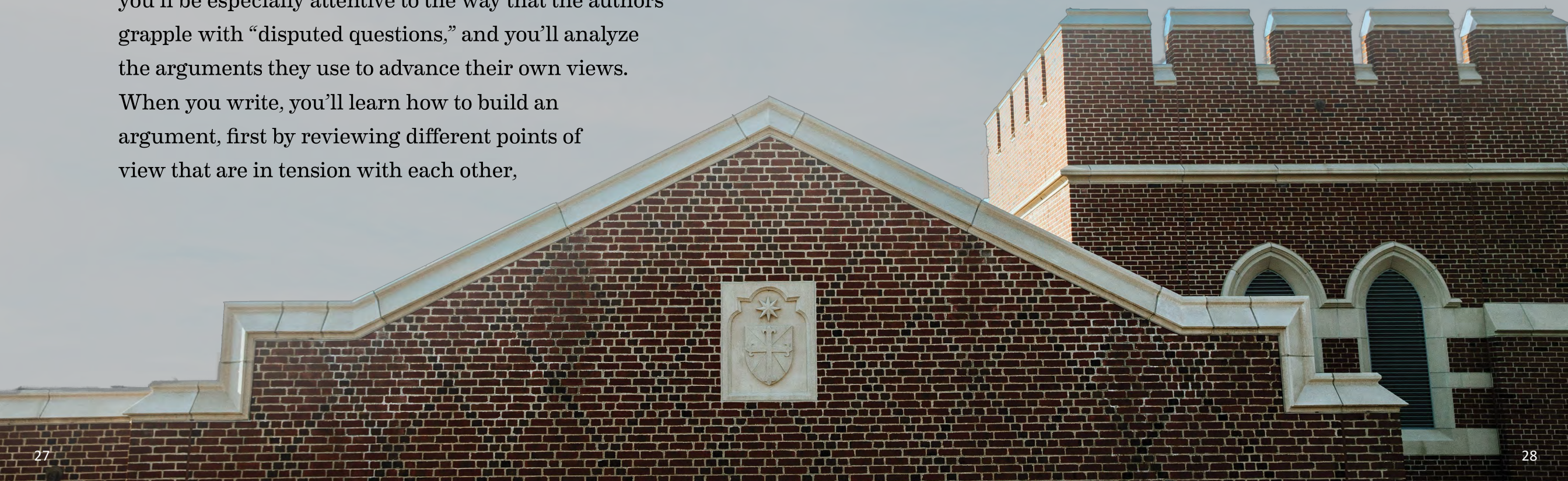
generations. In such a broad conversation, dealing with such crucial questions, it is no surprise that there are tensions and debates each step of the way. When confronted with conflicting views, a person might find themselves asking questions like: Is this true? Is it reasonable? What happens when various groups of people seem to fundamentally disagree? What do we do with the reality of a history that includes so much violence and injustice? How can I come to my own convictions when there are so many conflicting views? When one asks such questions, they are *thinking* critically.

A hallmark of the Dominican tradition is the “disputed question.” In the Middle Ages, Dominican professors would lead the class in debate exercises every week, giving them the resources needed to explore the best arguments on either side of controversial questions, and giving the students the tools to try to answer these disputed questions for themselves. Such an emphasis on learning to think rigorously and coherently, especially in the context of difficult questions, is one of the great features of a Dominican education. A person who has learned to ask hard questions, reason clearly, and reach sound

conclusions, will not be as easy to manipulate or control. This is intellectual freedom, and it is a vital element of the liberal arts tradition.

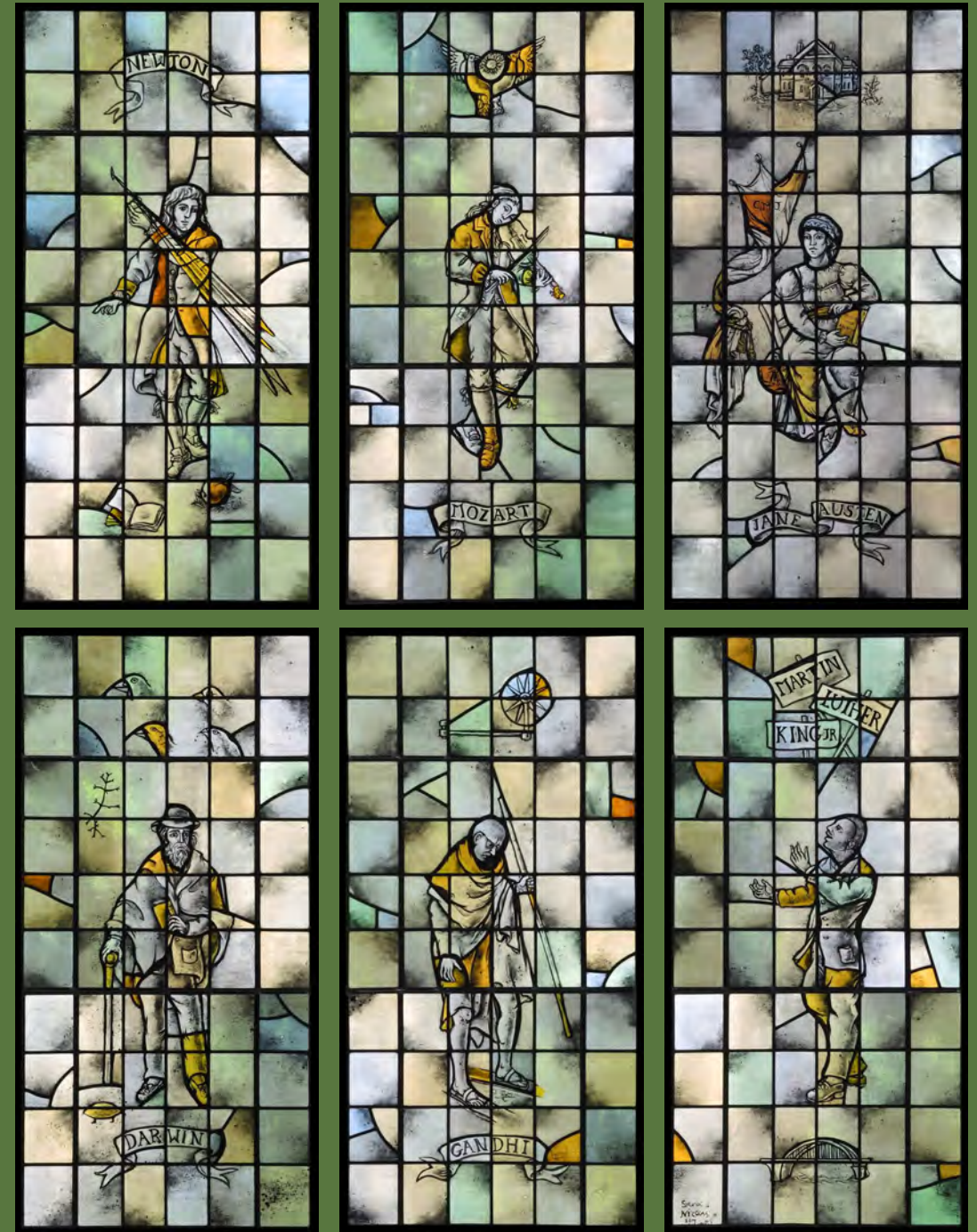
In **DWC 102**, you'll practice the skills that will help you enter the conversation with confidence by learning to appreciate different points of view, assess arguments to see if they are persuasive, and start to develop and articulate your own convictions on challenging questions. Many of the texts we read in DWC 102 are written by individuals who are engaged in debates that are of immense historical significance. As you read, you'll be especially attentive to the way that the authors grapple with "disputed questions," and you'll analyze the arguments they use to advance their own views. When you write, you'll learn how to build an argument, first by reviewing different points of view that are in tension with each other,

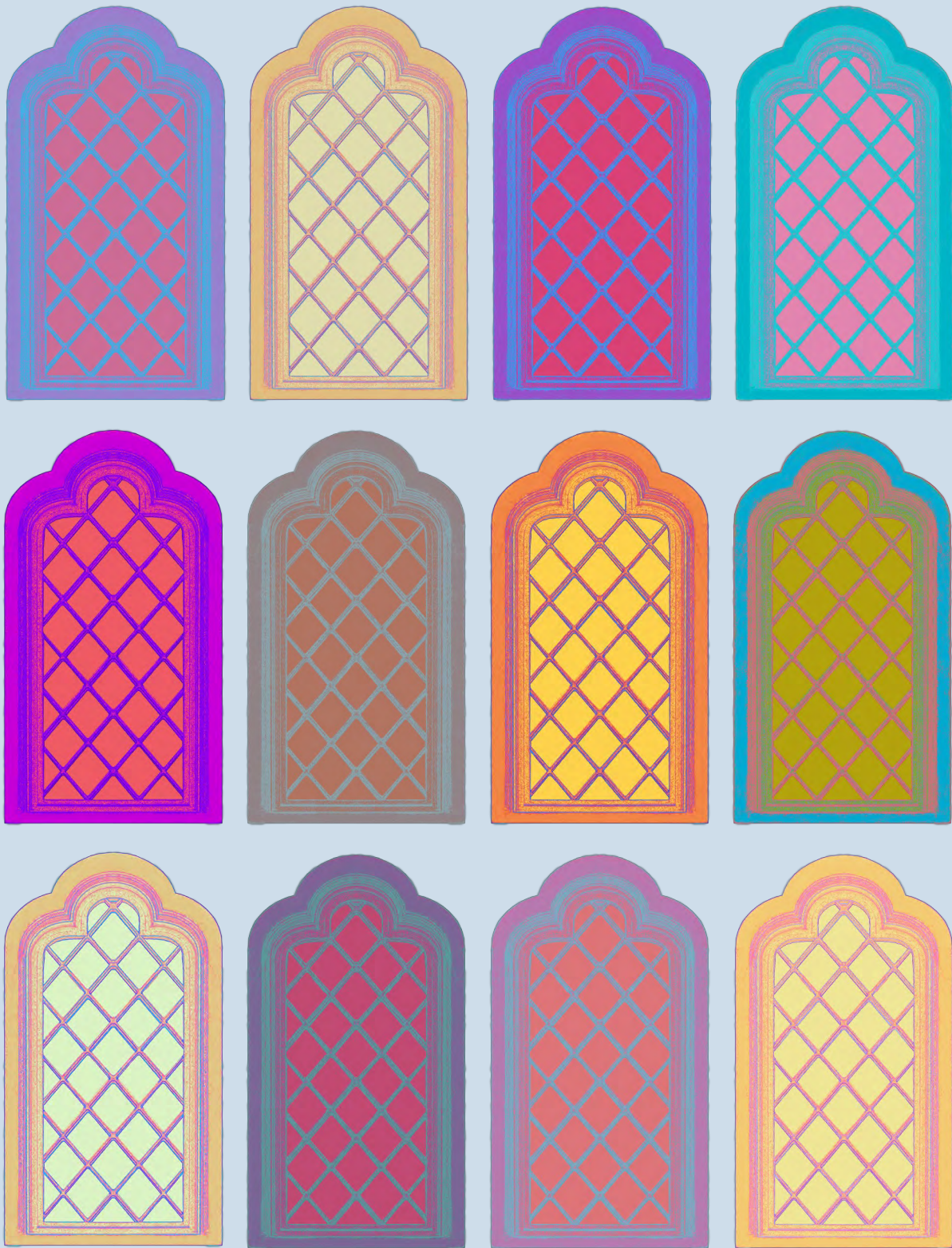
then by considering the potential strengths and weaknesses of the different views, and finally by determining where you stand in the conversation. Seminars will occasionally feature debates (or "disputations") that will invite you to think on your feet, learn to listen closely to opposing views, and work together to articulate arguments in a fast-paced conversation. Throughout this process, you'll fine-tune the ability to think for yourself, appreciate different perspectives, and engage in clear thinking, no matter what the issue might be.





One of the most important mottos of the Dominican order is “to contemplate and to pass on the fruits of contemplation.” As we have seen, a student of the liberal arts will have the gift of “remembering” the ideas that are foundational to the Western tradition, and they will learn how to “think” communally and coherently about the questions and problems that arise in the tradition. Such skills will bear good fruit, but that’s only the first part of the journey. It is also crucial to be able to pass on what we have learned. That’s why the third crucial skill is “communicating.” With this skill, one develops their own voice, learns how to communicate most effectively to their intended audience, and works to draw others toward deeper freedom. Those who have mastered the “liberating arts” will not only have something to say, but they will be equipped with the skills needed to be persuasive.





In **DWC 201**, you will be immersed in texts written by individuals who used their voices to boldly advance visions of revolution, reform, or renewal. This is an age of manifestos, an age of mass movements and mass media, an era of unprecedented change, a period when great leaders inspired millions to freedom, and a period when infamous dictators drove millions to war. In **DWC 201**, you will also encounter our modern world, in all its complexity and all its potential, and you'll be invited to consider how your voice can help bring healing, inspiration, transformation, and freedom.

The learning goals of the third semester will center on helping you to become a persuasive and effective communicator. In your written and oral communication, you will practice identifying your distinctive message, understanding your audience(s), considering how to shape your message to be as persuasive as possible, and developing an effective, impactful style. In seminar, you'll have opportunities to make short speeches, lead discussions, and respectfully communicate differing viewpoints. These exercises will be designed to help you feel more comfortable and confident when using your voice in a wide variety of circumstances. Throughout the semester, you will be invited to weave together your personal experiences, your academic reflections, and textual evidence to advance sophisticated and persuasive arguments.



## Colloquia: The “Three Ways” in Practice



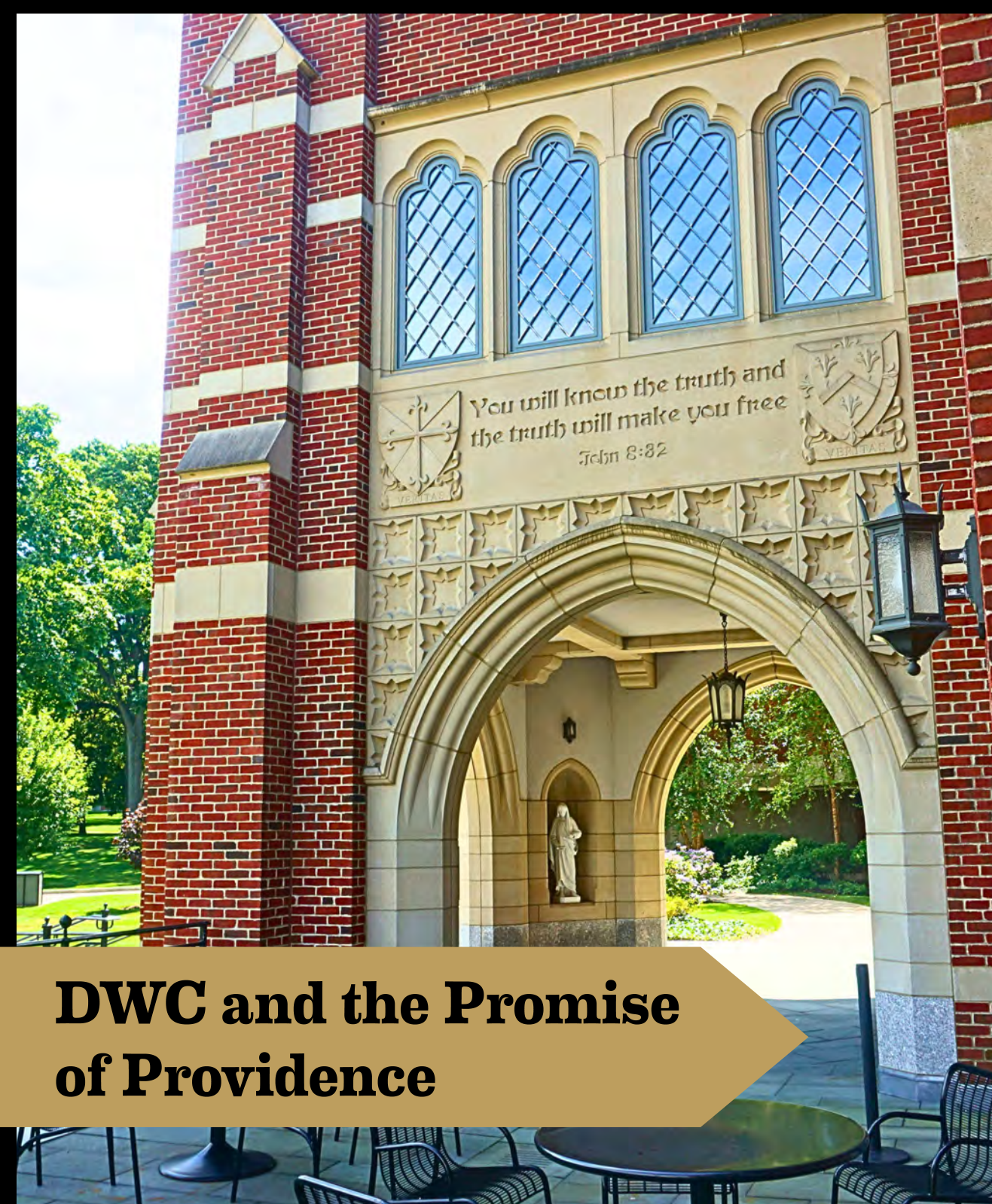
**T**he final class in the sequence is DWC 202, the “Civ Colloquium,” where you will dive deeper into specific areas of interest.

Building upon the first three semesters, the colloquia focus on contemporary issues that trace their roots back to ideas, topics, and themes addressed earlier in the course.



Colloquia often incorporate disciplines from across the academic spectrum, enabling students to see how they can apply the foundational skills of the liberal arts—remembering, thinking, and communicating—in any intellectual setting. While these offerings are constantly changing, students get to choose from dozens of options for their final semester of DWC. Here are just a few recent examples:

- **Apocalypse.** Study how various peoples have thought about the *end* of civilization (with professors from Philosophy and English).
- **The “Western Tradition” and Scientific Racism.** Study how scientific theories have influenced the evolution of racial categories (with professors from Biology and History).
- **The History and Science of Color.** Study color and its applications across time and place (with professors from Art History and Chemistry).
- **The History of Retail from Ancient Merchants to Amazon’s Marketplace.** Study the history of retailing across time and space (with professors from Marketing and History.)
- **Humor.** Study the ethics, politics, and metaphysical implications of humor (with professors from English and Philosophy).
- **Islam and the West.** Study the relationship of Muslim societies and the Western world through history, literature, art, and cinema (with professors from Theology and History).
- **The Neuropsychology and Ethics of Honor, Status, and Sociality.** Study the human desire for status and recognition (with professors from Psychology and Theology).
- **Demystifying the Canon.** Study Spanish-language literary texts focused on themes of gender identity, class struggle, and racial diversity (with professors from World Languages and Global Studies).
- **Dark Psychology and Literature.** Study the dark corners of the human psyche (with professors from English and Psychology).



## DWC and the Promise of Providence



**H**ere at PC,  
you'll benefit from  
a core curriculum that is  
distinctive and engaging,  
and it all begins with  
DWC as the “core of the  
core.”

By training in the foundational wisdom of  
the “liberating arts,” you will be equipping  
yourself with the skills needed for success



in your specific areas of academic study. Even more importantly, however, DWC will give you the precious opportunity, at the start of your college career, to think more about flourishing in every area of life. You will contemplate the gift of freedom and consider how you are being called by God to use your freedom to be an agent of good in the world. Hopefully this guide has helped you to get the lay-of-the-land as you begin your journey at Providence College!



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> As our 2010 core curriculum legislation says, “Providence College remains committed to the importance of a liberal education as preparation for life. The subjects that students study as undergraduates and, as importantly, the skills and habits of mind they acquire in the process, shape the lives they will lead after they leave college.”
- <sup>2</sup> David Henreckson, “Amid the Ruins,” in *The Liberating Arts: Why We Need Liberal Arts Education*, ed. Jeffrey Bilbro, Jessica Hooten Wilson, and David Henreckson (Plough, 2023), 13.
- <sup>3</sup> Martin Robinson, *Trivium 21c: Preparing Young People for the Future with Lessons from the Past* (Independent Thinking Press, 2013), 105.

