

## Introduction

*Moving to music not yet written...*

Welcome to the College of St. Catherine and the unique liberal arts education it offers you. We believe real education begins, as Adrienne Rich describes, by “refusing to let others do your thinking, talking, and naming for you; it means learning to respect and use your own brains and instinct.” This is the work of a lifetime. You began this learning before you came to college, of course, and none of us can know where it will ultimately take you. At St. Kate’s, both in and out of the classroom, you will have opportunities to affirm what you know, to test it, to deepen it, to revise it. Through courses, campus organizations and activities, groups of friends and teams of co-workers, internships or activism in the wider community, a St. Catherine education supports you and challenges you to move beyond what is known and familiar. You are invited to explore further a vast universe of knowledge, values, and skills: where they come from, how well they work, how to create them, how they fit together, and how to use them.

Our vision for a St. Catherine education has been developing, since the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet founded the college in 1905, through braiding together three interlocking threads: Catholic, liberal arts, and women. Just as the Sisters in France taught lace making to help women support themselves, St. Kate’s helps you weave an education by drawing together Catholic intellectual traditions and social teachings with the liberating disciplines of the arts and sciences in a learning environment uniquely suited to women. To prepare women to lead and influence, we have developed a set of Liberal Arts Goals to guide both curriculum (courses) and co-curriculum (programs available outside the classroom). These Liberal Arts Goals and the college Mission, Leadership, and Roman Catholic Identity Statements are in the Resources section of this text.

Many students enter college with the main goal of completing a major, and studying deeply in one field is certainly important. However, a liberal arts education prepares you for much more than a job. It prepares you to navigate a complex and constantly changing world, to understand issues no one is yet discussing, to make decisions none of us can predict, to take on work that has not even been invented, and to enrich your life with meaning, purpose, and satisfaction. To learn to “move to music not yet written” requires rigorous study in a variety of subjects, taking risks to try new and challenging experiences, and a commitment to excellence – expecting the very best of yourself. In this kind of education, you invest your time and energy in learning that will be valuable no matter what life brings you. The goals of a College of St. Catherine’s liberal arts education are to learn how to collaborate with others; how to act ethically; how to understand and honor diversity; how to gather, analyze, and use information to support your positions and decisions; how to communicate your ideas; and how to continue growing intellectually throughout your life.

This course, *The Reflective Woman*, introduces you to liberal arts learning at St. Kate’s. We require it because the College believes that a common experience helps to build a community and to accomplish our unique mission. As the first step in our “core curriculum,” *The Reflective Woman* is designed for these specific liberal arts goals:

1. Critical and creative inquiry

- to understand and use different kinds of information
  - to reflect on the meaning of your experiences, observations, passions, and imagination
  - to begin to analyze complex issues and arguments
  - to explore how different disciplines approach learning
2. Effective communication
    - to improve your reading, listening and discussion skills
    - to better organize and present your ideas in writing
    - to explore expression through the arts;
  3. Understanding diversity
    - to understand the experiences of women
    - to understand how race/ethnicity, gender, social class, and other differences affect identity and contribute to systems of power and privilege.

Certainly, other goals are also addressed in this course; we believe it can affect your self-concept, enhance your ability to work in groups, and appreciate different ways of learning. It introduces ideas about justice and ways of working to improve our communities. Like any course, however, meeting the goals of *The Reflective Woman* relies largely on students taking responsibility for their own learning. There is no expert lecturing while you sit passively writing down the “right” answers for a test. Rather, as a discussion-based course taught by instructors from all over the college, it depends on each class member reading carefully, discussing actively, and contributing to everyone’s learning. *The Reflective Woman Reader* has been designed to assist you in preparing for class. Each unit begins with an introduction explaining the focus of that section, and each reading starts with information about the writer and some questions to ponder as you read the selection.

This approach to learning will continue throughout the courses you take at St. Kate’s to complete a baccalaureate degree. The baccalaureate includes study of a variety of liberal arts subjects, which we call the “liberal arts distribution requirements.” One strategy to completing these requirements is a Core Minor, which links several courses together with a common theme. While not required, core minors are designed to help students make clearer connections between subjects and learn to approach complex issues from multiple perspectives. If you major or minor in a liberal arts discipline, you will explore the liberal arts in a deeper and more disciplined way than the core curriculum offers. However, all majors here build on a liberal arts foundation, and our programs in professional and health fields are richer because of the strength of our liberal arts requirements. In addition, the College of St. Catherine offers a rich variety of opportunities outside the classroom to develop your interests and skills, which we encourage you to explore with your advisor throughout your years here. Finally, regardless of your major, in your final core course, *The Global Search for Justice*, you will be able to analyze a justice issue in depth, such as environmental concerns, racism, or health disparities, and explore the responsibility of global citizens to work for change.

Education at St. Kate’s may seem similar in many ways to what is offered at other colleges and universities, but much you will find here, beginning with *The Reflective Woman*, is unique. We believe this difference is essential in an education that prepares women to lead and influence. To meet this mission, we design our liberal arts education with *you* at its heart, respecting your own

uniqueness, appreciating the perspectives you bring, and trusting in your capacity to claim this education for your own.

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June 2008