

# Gap Year College Credit

# STUDENT HANDBOOK



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# WELCOME!

Thank you for enrolling in college credit coursework through the **Gap Year Association** (GYA)! We're delighted that you've decided to enhance your gap year experience with additional independent study coursework.

GYA maintains a School of Record relationship with the **University of Montana** (UM), which allows you to enroll in UM-approved courses for undergraduate credits. Once you complete the coursework, you will receive an official University of Montana transcript reflecting the courses that you completed during your gap year experience.

**Please do not contact UM directly about your grades or transcripts.** GYA, your Accredited Program Provider, and/or your assigned Instructor of Record will be your primary points of contact moving forward.

Sincerely,





# ***COURSE EXPECTATIONS***



## **READ YOUR SYLLABUS!**

Make sure you carefully review your course syllabus before departing for your gap year experience. **Please pay attention to the full course requirements on each individual syllabus.** Missing a requirement, turning in an assignment late, or failing to read/properly cite a required reading are the most common reasons that student grades are reduced.



## **PARTICIPATE FULLY IN YOUR GAP YEAR PROGRAM**

Aside from temporary absences related to illness or other emergencies, attendance throughout the duration of your program is required for completion of a GYA course for college credit. **If you depart your program before it concludes for any reason, your official course grade will appear as a “W” (Withdrawal) on an official UM transcript.**



## **BE AVAILABLE VIA EMAIL FOR INSTRUCTOR CORRESPONDENCE**

By enrolling in GYA’s independent study coursework, you consent to being available via email for all coursework submissions and all communication with your assigned Instructor of Record. If desired, you may request a video call with your instructor to discuss your coursework at any time during the semester. **If you are unresponsive to emails from your instructor and fail to submit your assignments on time, you may end up with an Incomplete/Failing grade for the course on your official UM transcript.**

# ***IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS...***

## **YOU ARE NOW ENROLLED IN A COLLEGE COURSE!**

Even though these courses have a different structure than on-campus classes, **they are still undergraduate college courses that will expect college-level participation from you.** This means high attention to detail in the quality of your assignments, as well as efficient communication with your Instructor of Record. **If you don't believe you'll be able to produce high quality coursework, and/or be responsive to your instructor's messages, you may not be ready to enroll in a GYA course.** If you realize that the independent study coursework is not for you, you have two weeks from the start of your program to withdraw without a record of the course on your official University of Montana transcript.

## **IF YOU DO NOT COMPLETE OR PASS A COURSE...**

We understand that goals and priorities may change throughout a semester, and you may have your own reasons for not completing a course. However, **it is important that you understand the implications of incomplete coursework:**

- **on your academic record:** If you fail to submit your course assignments, your course grade will appear as a "W" (Withdrawal) on your official UM transcript, which will remain a part of your permanent academic record.
- **on your finances:** If you paid for your course and program with a 529 Education Savings Fund, but do not complete the course, your gap year experience will no longer be considered a "qualifying educational expense." This means that you and/or your family may have to pay a hefty tax penalty for withdrawing 529 funds for non-qualifying expenses.

## ***QUESTIONS?***

Reach out to your program provider for more information, or contact GYA directly



# WITHDRAWALS & REFUNDS



## DEADLINES FOR DROPPING OR WITHDRAWING FROM A COURSE

**The last day to drop coursework is two weeks from your program's start date.** If you drop by this date, the drop will not appear on your official University of Montana transcript. Please notify GYA at [info@gapyearassociation.org](mailto:info@gapyearassociation.org) if you wish to drop a course before this deadline.

Intent to withdraw from a course after the two-week mark must be confirmed via email to BOTH your Instructor of Record and GYA staff ([info@gapyearassociation.org](mailto:info@gapyearassociation.org)).



## WITHDRAWALS ON YOUR ACADEMIC RECORD

**Withdrawing from coursework after the first two weeks of your program—or failing to submit the required coursework—will result in a “W” (Withdrawal) on your official University of Montana transcript. This will remain a part of your permanent academic record.**



## REFUND POLICIES

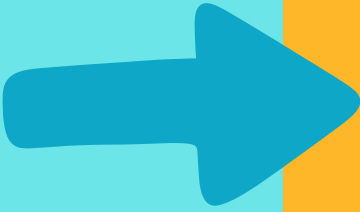
Students who withdraw from college credit coursework within two weeks of their program's start date will incur a **\$850 cancellation fee**. After the first two weeks of the program, no college credit refunds will be provided for any reason, including illness, injury, or inability to complete the program.

# ***COURSEWORK & GRADES***



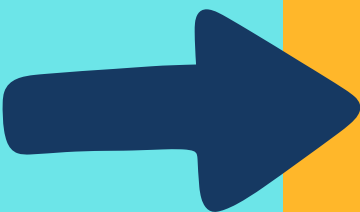
## **SUBMITTING COURSEWORK**

**Email all coursework to your Instructor of Record**—including your journal entries and final paper (for COLS 191 or CTE 191) or video, blog, and final paper (for internship courses). Internship evaluations will be automatically received by GYA upon completion of the online forms.



## **DEADLINES FOR SUBMITTING COURSEWORK & ACCESSING GRADES**

**All course assignments/requirements must be submitted to your Instructor of Record no later than one month after the last day of your program.** Final grades will be available and submitted to the University of Montana one month after your coursework submission deadline, and official transcripts will be available by the 15th day of the following month.



## **TRANSCRIPTS & ENROLLMENT DOCUMENTATION**

**Once grades are posted, the University of Montana will email you a registration confirmation with your UM student ID number and instructions for ordering official transcripts. Students must pay a small additional fee for any official transcripts ordered.**

**Please note: students will NOT receive a tuition statement tax form (1098-T) for receiving GYA college credit.** We recommend maintaining proof of tuition payment to your program provider and documentation of enrollment with the University of Montana in the form of a student ID number and/or official transcript.

# ***A NOTE ON 529 SAVINGS PLANS***

## ***What is a 529 Education Savings Plan?***

**A 529 Education Savings Plan is an investment account that offers tax-free withdrawals and other benefits when used to pay for “qualifying educational expenses.”**

If you earn college credit from an accredited institution (like the University of Montana) during your gap year program, you may be able to count both your credit registration fee AND program tuition as qualifying educational expenses that can be covered by your 529 Savings Plan.

***If considering this option, you should consult with your own tax professional and/or 529 plan administrator in order to verify that expenses are considered qualifying and allowable.***

***If you enrolled in GYA/UM college credit in order to withdraw credit registration and program tuition costs from a 529 plan, **YOU MUST BE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE CREDITS EARNED** in order for the withdrawals to be considered for “qualifying educational expenses.” This means that if you do not complete or pass your coursework, you may be liable for hefty tax penalties for the withdrawal of non-qualifying expenses from your 529 plan.***



# GYA COURSES



*For students participating in a cohort-based program*

## **CTE 191: INTRO TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

*3 semester credits*

This course is designed to introduce students to principles, theories, and practices of leadership development. Through a combination of theoretical frameworks, self-reflection, and practical applications to lived experiences, students will gain insights into effective leadership strategies, communication skills, and ethical decision-making. The course facilitates self-assessment of students' leadership styles and examination of successful leadership qualities in various contexts.



## **COLS 191: SELF & CULTURE IN EXPERIENTIAL COHORTS**

*3 semester credits*

This course is designed to foster an understanding of fundamental principles of communication, relationship-building, cultural development, and other group dynamics within an experiential cohort-based program. Through readings, self-reflection, and examination of group dynamics in their cohort-based experience, students will examine the roles that culture, identity, and communication play in cohort formation within personal, academic, and/or professional settings.

# ***GYA COURSES***



*For students participating in a formal internship program*

## **CTE 298: INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIP**

*1-6 semester credits*

This internship course is designed for students gaining hands-on experience in a wide range of industries (including journalism, graphic design, creative writing, marketing, finance, etc.) in an international setting. By completing reflective exercises, participating in intentional mentorship, and submitting internship evaluations, students can earn up to 1 semester credit for every 45 internship hours.



## **CTE 298: DOMESTIC INTERNSHIP**

*1-6 semester credits*

This internship course is designed for students gaining hands-on experience in a wide range of industries (including journalism, graphic design, creative writing, marketing, finance, etc.) in a domestic U.S.-based setting. By completing reflective exercises, participating in intentional mentorship, and submitting internship evaluations, students can earn up to 1 semester credit for every 45 internship hours.

# RESOURCES TO HELP WITH COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS

Once you are enrolled in a course and receive a student ID number from the University of Montana, you are eligible to use the services at UM's Writing Center, which offers online appointments.

*U of M*  
**WRITING  
CENTER**



**We highly encourage you to take advantage of this service as you draft your final paper:** UM's writing consultants can offer valuable guidance around organizing a topic, proper use of evidence and citations, developing effective arguments, and much more. Making an appointment with a writing consultant can often make the writing process more efficient, reducing the time you spend on your assignment while helping you develop a higher quality product.

*Create an account and sign up for an appointment*



## Citing A.I. source material according to:



The use of generative AI is discouraged for GYA courses, since the nature of the course assignments asks students to think critically about their personal experience and observations; however, students may choose to utilize generative AI tools in order to brainstorm ideas and/or supplement research for their final report(s). **Students are required to cite any AI-generated material that contributes to their work, including in-text citations, quotations, and references, according to current APA or MLA guidelines for citing generative AI.**

# ***TIPS FROM FORMER STUDENTS***

See if other students in your gap year program are earning college credit! Sharing books and resources makes the coursework more fun.

Print out your course syllabus and have it with you during your program. Internet access may be spotty, so it is good to have hard copies.

Your program staff are great! Don't be afraid to ask them questions about paper topics, reading lists, etc.

If you have any questions or issues that come up, email your Instructor of Record! They're available before, during, and after your program. Instead of agonizing over a course issue, just communicate with them about extensions, approval for new readings, troubleshooting, etc.

***Visit GYA's website  
for a list of FAQs***

