Students with the talent and energy for working independently and with the strong support of two faculty advisors may undertake a Contract Major; a coherent study of an interdisciplinarity subject not covered by a regularly offered major. Such a major must be in an area suitable to the talents of the faculty in residence and cannot consist of minor modifications to an existing major. A Contract Major also must conform to the structure and have the coherence of a departmental or program major—i.e., it must embody a disciplined cumulative study that moves from an elementary to an advanced level and culminates in a synthesis similar to a senior major course. Hence, a Contract Major usually consists of a program of existing courses, sometimes supplemented by courses of independent study and the senior course.

The process of constructing a proposal for a Contract Major is both interesting and demanding. As part of that process, students should consider carefully the advantage of working within existing majors or programs, taking note of the considerable intellectual pleasures involved in sharing similar educational experiences with other students working within the same field. Students might also consider whether their interests could be met by completing a regular major and coordinate program, or two majors, or simply by working outside a major field in courses of special interest. Because the Contract Major represents an exceptional opportunity provided for students whose interests cannot be met through existing departmental and interdepartmental majors and programs, it cannot be pursued in conjunction with another major.

Students who wish to explore or propose a Contract Major should consult with the Contract Major Advisor and with potential faculty sponsors as early as possible in the fall semester of the sophomore year, and then—during the sophomore year—follow these procedures:

1) The student must initiate discussion with at least two members of the faculty from differing departments who expect to be in residence during the student’s senior year and who are willing to endorse the Contract Major and undertake a central role in supervising its implementation, criticism, evaluation, and ultimate validation. Since in essence faculty sponsors substitute for the student’s major department, they are expected to play an important role in the Contract Major.

The student must develop, in conjunction with the faculty sponsors, a written proposal (forms and guidelines are available in the Registrar’s Office) which should contain:
   a) a description of the proposed major area of study and an explanation of the reasons for proposing the Contract Major. A sound and persuasive rationale for the major is crucial for obtaining approval from the Committee on Educational Policy (C.E.P.).
   b) a list of all courses in the proposed major and an explanation for each course choice. A minimum of nine semester courses, one of which must be designated the senior major course (and taken during the senior year), must be completed for a Contract Major. Normal rules governing course grades and grade point average apply for entry into and continuation in a Contract Major.
   c) a list of other courses taken or anticipated to meet College distribution requirements, including grades received in courses already completed.

2) By mid-January, the student must meet with the Contract Major Advisor to discuss and further develop the proposal.

3) By the first day of spring semester classes, the student must submit a complete draft of the proposal to the Contract Major Advisor for feedback.

4) By the end of the fourth week of the spring semester, the student must submit the final proposal to the Contract Major Advisor. By this date also, the faculty sponsors must submit their endorsement forms to the Contract Major Advisor. If the student is essentially proposing to transform an existing program (e.g., Africana Studies, area studies programs, Environmental Studies), into a Contract Major, the chair of that program should also submit to the Contract Major Advisor a statement attesting to the validity of the proposal by the end of the fourth week of the spring semester.

5) The Contract Major Advisor then conveys the proposal, a copy of the student’s most recent academic progress report, the faculty sponsors’ endorsement forms, and recommendations regarding the feasibility and substance of the proposal, for approval by the Committee on Educational Policy. The C.E.P., after consultation with departments and programs substantially affected by a proposal, will vote on each proposal individually and will notify students and sponsors before the spring registration deadline. If the time needed for C.E.P. review demands it, the Contract Major Advisor may permit them to register late without penalty. In making its decisions, the C.E.P. considers the student’s academic record, the coherence and feasibility of the plan of study, and the degree of support expressed by the faculty sponsors and, if appropriate, program chairs.

Subsequent changes in a Contract Major must be requested in writing by the student and approved by the faculty sponsors as well as by the Contract Major Advisor. Where there has been substantial alteration of the original program, the Contract Major Advisor will forward the student’s written request to the C.E.P. for reconsideration.

THE DEGREE WITH HONORS IN THE CONTRACT MAJOR

The route to the degree with honors in the Contract Major will normally be a senior thesis requiring two semesters and a winter study of work. In special circumstances, a student may propose to substitute a one-semester course or a winter study course for one of his or her thesis courses and write a mini-thesis. The Contract Major with honors shall comprise a minimum of eleven semester courses or ten semester courses plus one winter study. One semester of independent study undertaken for the thesis may be allowed to fulfill the requirement for a senior major course.

The faculty sponsors shall determine by the end of winter study whether the student is to be admitted to honors candidacy. If not admitted to honors candidacy, the student may elect not to continue further independent study. If admitted to honors candidacy, the student shall submit a written thesis or mini-thesis to three faculty readers, at least one of whom shall be a faculty sponsor and at least one of whom shall not be a faculty sponsor. The outside reader or readers shall be selected by the Contract Major Advisor in consultation with the faculty sponsors. There will be a one-hour oral exam by the readers, and they shall make a final decision regarding honors.

CMAJ 493(F)-W31, W31-494(S) Senior Thesis

CMAJ 497(F), 498(S) Independent Study