

Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities

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Program of Study

The Bachelor of Arts degree program in Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities (ISHU) offers qualified undergraduates the opportunity to shape an interdisciplinary plan of course work centered in, but not necessarily restricted to, study in the humanities. The program is meant to accommodate a course of study that could not otherwise be carried out easily within the structures of a single disciplinary major.

One of the notable features of the program is the requirement that all ISHU majors complete a formal BA paper at the end of their term of study that integrates the disparate fields of each student's study in a truly interdisciplinary manner. A BA paper will normally consist of an analytical research paper. An alternative option is a creative BA project, which would be accompanied by an analytical write-up of the project's background, conceptual problem(s), and methodology.

To be considered for admission to this BA program, a student must submit an application. This application consists of the student's selection and rationalization of a plan of courses that form a discrete field of interdisciplinary study. (The specific materials and protocol necessary for the application are described below.) The application process is designed to make clear in each individual case what intellectual concerns are to be related to one another through interdisciplinary study and what method of comparative analysis is suited to such an approach.

Students should discuss plans and proposed courses with both the ISHU chair and College adviser. These meetings will help students evaluate the available courses of study to arrive at a balanced and coherent interdisciplinary plan.

Once a student is admitted to ISHU, she or he will come to have the support also of the BA preceptor and, by the end of the third year, a faculty BA adviser. The preceptor is typically a graduate student with interdisciplinary expertise who will help the student to progress towards successful completion of the degree program, including completion of the BA paper. The faculty adviser is a faculty member who has expertise in the student's main field of study, and agrees to supervise the

development of the BA paper specifically. (The student is responsible for securing a faculty BA adviser, but can ask the ISHU staff for assistance in doing so.)

A student in the ISHU BA program will take courses in two or three academic departments, and it is common for ISHU majors to have two or three sets of chosen courses that do not intersect with each other at all. (Your program is interdisciplinary; your courses, individually, need not be interdisciplinary.) There is, however, a required structure to the distribution of courses that a student takes, and there are two specific courses that every ISHU major must take. These requirements are explained below.

Program Requirements

Each student's program of study must meet the following six distribution requirements. Students can ensure that these requirements are met by completing the application worksheet that is available from the ISHU College adviser or ishum.uchicago.edu:

- (1) Six courses in a primary field or in closely integrated subject areas in more than one field.
- (2) Three courses in a first supporting field or in closely integrated subject areas in more than one field.
- (3) Three courses in a second supporting field or in closely integrated subject areas in more than one field.

A "field" is defined in one of three ways: (a) a selection of courses from a traditional department (such as Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations or Philosophy), (b) a traditional discipline spread over more than one department (such as a "Theater" field containing South Asian Languages and Civilizations and Theater and Performance Studies courses), or (c) an interdisciplinary set of courses under a certain rubric (such as an "American studies" field containing courses from English, History, and Sociology, or a "Narrative/Storytelling" field containing courses from Romance or Slavic Languages and Literatures, Anthropology, and Psychology). Students are encouraged to create their six-course field from a single, traditional discipline, so that, however broad their program, they can also have some depth of learning in a single discipline.

Any one of the fields listed under (1), (2), and (3) may be drawn from outside the humanities.

(4) Two courses or one sequence of two courses (drawn from offerings in the humanities) that emphasizes intellectual approaches or critical methods germane to a student's particular interdisciplinary course program.

(5) ISHU 29801 (The BA Colloquium) in the Spring Quarter of the third year, which meets three times over the quarter and is taught by the ISHU BA preceptor. The purpose of this course is for each student to begin working on the structure

and argument of the BA paper that he or she will complete the following year. At the end of the course, each student will have written a proposal for the BA paper, which will generally be a précis of the argument that the student anticipates making. Grading for this course is *Pass/Fail (P/F)* for all students.

Students should note that the course carries no numerical credit towards their degree (it is a “zero-unit” course). It cannot fill any role in the student’s degree program other than the one it is designed to fill; it also cannot be an elective. Because it is a noncredit course, students must carry at least three additional courses while registered for ISHU 29801 in order to meet requirements for full-time student status. Regardless of these technical qualifications, the course is compulsory for ISHU majors in their third year unless an exemption is granted for unusual circumstances, such as the student’s being in residence at a study-abroad program that quarter.

(6) ISHU 29900 (Preparation of the BA Project). This course is structured as an independent study. The instructor will be the student’s faculty BA adviser. It should be taken in the Autumn or Winter Quarter of fourth year, but in special circumstances may be taken in Spring Quarter of fourth year. The faculty adviser will devise a plan of reading and writing for the student and will critique drafts of the student’s BA paper as they develop.

Summary of Requirements

6	primary field courses
3	secondary field courses
3	supporting field courses
2	critical/intellectual methods courses
–	ISHU 28901 (BA colloquium)
<u>1</u>	ISHU 29900 (BA paper)
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BA Paper Preparation Related Deadlines. In order to maintain good standing in the program, fourth-year ISHU majors are expected to meet certain deadlines as they move toward completing their BA paper: (This schedule is based upon a normal Spring Quarter graduation plan; students planning to graduate in another quarter should adjust the various deadlines accordingly.)

Fourth year ISHU students will meet with the BA preceptor at least twice during the Autumn Quarter and twice again during the Winter Quarter. In these meetings they will discuss their work with the preceptor and show him or her drafts of the BA paper or, in the minimal case, evidence of their progress toward the completion of the paper. By the end of the Autumn Quarter, fourth-year students will turn in a preliminary draft/first iteration of the BA paper to the preceptor. There will then be a pre-final draft due to the faculty BA adviser, the ISHU chair, and the preceptor for perusal and critique by the end of the Winter Quarter. The final BA paper should be turned in to each of these three people and also to the academic advisor by Friday of fourth week in Spring Quarter.

In addition to these departmental requirements, a student's faculty BA adviser may impose earlier deadlines and further conditions in relation to the work expected of the student in ISHU 29900.

Sample Programs. While the potential for developing individual BA programs in Interdisciplinary Studies is as great as the combined ingenuity, imagination, and interest of each student in consultation with his or her advisers, there are identifiable patterns in the choices of fields and lines of inquiry currently being implemented in the ISHU program. The most prominent of these include the following:

(1) *Study in philosophy and literature* (with either literature or philosophy emphasized) to investigate differences in handling concepts and language in philosophy and literature and/or mutual influence between the two fields.

(2) *Study in verbal and nonverbal art forms and expressions* (art and literature; and music and literature) leading to consideration of the implications of the verbal and nonverbal distinction for interpretation and criticism.

(3) *Study in the history, philosophy, language, religious expression, and literary and artistic productions of a given culture or of a given historical period within one or more cultures.* Examples include American studies, the Renaissance, the Near East, or Greece (and the Mediterranean) in the preclassical and classical ages.

(4) *Study in humanistic fields* (e.g., literature and philosophy) *and in a social science field* (e.g., sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science). This option is particularly adapted to a focus on gender studies. Please note, however, that the College offers a major in Gender Studies.

(5) *Study of modern culture in its various aspects of popular and elite forms of cultural expression.*

(6) *Study in humanistic approaches to biological or physical science.* This option is particularly adapted to interest in problems or aspects of intellectual and cultural history (e.g., the impact of Newtonian physics on eighteenth-century European thought) or to study of modern society and science's role within it (medical ethics being one possible focus among many).

(7) *Study in human rights* in relation to one or two humanistic disciplines such as philosophy, literature, or history.

Application. Interested students should make application to the ISHU program as soon as possible upon completion of general education requirements (typically by the end of the second year and, except in extraordinary circumstances, no later than the end of Autumn Quarter of the third year). Transfer students in particular are urged to apply at the earliest point that they can. An application is initiated by securing an interview with the ISHU chair and College adviser, to discuss the feasibility of shaping and implementing a given set of interdisciplinary concerns into a course of study for the BA.

After consultation, students who wish to pursue an application to the ISHU program must submit a recent course transcript (with a minimum *B* average in preceding course work) and a two-part written proposal according to the following guidelines:

(1) *Personal Statement*. The first part of the proposal consists of a personal reflective statement of approximately 500 to 1,000 words in length, explaining the character of their interdisciplinary interests and stating as thoughtfully as possible how they propose to channel and expand them within course offerings currently available. Some consideration of prospects and possibilities for a BA paper or project is a desirable part of these statements, if it can be provided.

(2) *Course Prospectus*. The second part of the proposal consists of a list of courses to fill the headings given in the above set of guidelines. This list will include courses the student has already taken as well as ones he or she intends to take. While a list of courses the student proposes to take is a required part of the application, it is understood that these will undergo modification. Any changes to the course prospectus should be discussed with (and approved by) the College adviser.

After the application materials have been reviewed by the ISHU chair and academic adviser, a twenty-minute interview will be scheduled with the ISHU chair. The ISHU chair will inform the student via email of the result of the application.

Grading. All courses in the major must be taken for a quality grade (that is, *A*, *B*, *C*, *D*, or *F* with + and – grades), *with the exception of* the zero-unit course ISHU 29801, for which students will receive a grade of *Pass* or *Fail*.

Honors. To be eligible for honors, a student must maintain an overall GPA of 3.25 or higher and a GPA in the major of 3.5 or higher. Honors are reserved for the student whose BA project shows exceptional intellectual merit in the judgment of the faculty adviser, ISHU chair, and master of the Humanities Collegiate Division.

Advising. Close contact with the faculty and staff relevant to the student's career in ISHU—including the ISHU College adviser, chair, and preceptor, and the faculty adviser of the BA paper—is essential in a program that involves so much individual initiative and experimentation. Students are encouraged to seek their advice whenever they have an intellectual or practical concern about progress in the major.

Faculty

Since ISHU is an interdisciplinary major whose field of study encompasses all the offerings in the various departments and programs of the University (particularly in the Humanities Division), all faculty members of these varied departments and programs are related to ISHU. ISHU students may approach any University of Chicago faculty member who works in his or her field of interest with a

request to serve as faculty adviser for the BA paper. Similarly, ISHU students may take courses with any faculty member from any department of the University.

Courses: Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities (ISHU)

For the same reason—that ISHU is an interdisciplinary major whose field of study encompasses all the offerings in the various departments and programs of the University (particularly in the Humanities Division)—all substantive and methodology courses offered in these varied departments and programs are viable courses for the program. ISHU students may take any courses offered in the University that fit in with their program of study, provided these are approved by the ISHU College adviser and chair.

In addition to the above courses that are grounded in particular fields of study, the program requires all ISHU students to take two courses that are related to the preparation of the BA paper:

29801. The BA Colloquium. *Required of third-year students who are majoring in ISHU. This zero-unit, noncredit course must be taken for P/F grading. To meet requirements for full-time student status, students must carry at least three additional courses while registered for this course. Spring.*

29900. Preparation of the BA Project. *PQ: Consent of faculty adviser and ISHU chair. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form. Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

More details of these two courses have been provided earlier in the section Program Requirements.

Moreover, inasmuch as the ability to write clear, effective prose is part of the essential skill set required of the humanist endeavor, ISHU students are encouraged (but not required) to take a course on academic writing such as:

23000. The Little Red Schoolhouse (Academic and Professional Writing). (=ENGL 13000/33000) *PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing. This course does not count towards the ISHU program requirements. May be taken for P/F grading by students who are not majoring in English. Materials fee \$20. L. McEnerney, K. Cochran, T. Weiner. Winter, Spring.*