Chicago Studies

Department Website: http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu

Chicago Studies (http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu) provides opportunities for undergraduates to engage, learn about, and serve the City of Chicago in ways that enrich and build upon their chosen fields of study. Its menu of curricular programs, events, and para-curricular experiences is designed to create flows of scholarly and civic inspiration between the life of the city and all disciplines represented in the College, and to develop the practice of local citizenship among students through reciprocal collaborations between the campus and the city. Chicago Studies develops intensive, place-based academic encounters, research experiences, and opportunities for engagement that help students think critically and substantively about urban areas more broadly.

Chicago Studies sponsors regular roundtables on Chicago-focused research and social issues to introduce College students to potential mentors, methodologies for urban research, and Chicago research topics. The “Engage Chicago through Research” data portal (http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/research) collects and promotes Chicago-focused datasets and research, including student research, to further promote the study of the city. Each year, the Chicago Studies Undergraduate Research prize and colloquium (sponsored in collaboration with the College Center for Research and Fellowships (http://ccrf.uchicago.edu)) highlights the best essays written by University of Chicago undergraduates on the history, politics, and cultural life of Chicago; the finalists in this competition are published in the Chicago Studies annual, a professionally edited and designed journal. A subcommittee of the Chicago Studies Faculty Advisory Board considers submissions, which may be from any discipline, each spring.

Chicago Studies partners with the Program on the Global Environment, Office of Civic Engagement, UChicago Arts, the Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation, and the Institute of Politics to curate co-curricular experiences that introduce students and faculty to events, resources, and organizations throughout the Chicago region. Students in the College can also obtain advising and resources to connect their programs of study with partners and communities across the city. Chicago Studies also works closely with Career Advancement, the Institute of Politics, the Pozen Family Center for Human Rights, and Civic Engagement–sponsored programs, such as the University Community Service Center and the Neighborhood Schools Program, to connect students with substantive internship and research fellowship opportunities with organizations engaged in the life of the city.

Chicago Studies Quarters

The Chicago Studies Quarters offer a cohesive set of courses that join classroom instruction with experiential learning opportunities, using the city and the region as a site of inspiration and instruction.

The Chicago Studies Quarter (CSQ) (http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/quarter) is a selective, quarter-long academic program that allows a small cohort of students to devote an entire term to the intensive study and exploration of the distinctive folkways and civic codes that distinguish Chicago as a world city. Admitted students enroll in three interconnected courses with a common theme, taught by distinguished scholars in various disciplines. Like Study Abroad courses, CSQ courses utilize excursions within the city, guest speakers, and engagement with civic groups and leaders to enrich class readings and assignments. Participants in the CSQ are required to take all three course offerings, but may register for a fourth course of their choosing provided it does not conflict with the required classes or the mandatory excursions held on Fridays.

Chicago Studies Quarter: Calumet (http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/calumet) focuses on topics of human land use in the Calumet Region just south and east of the city. It is a full-time, one-quarter experience intended to help students bridge theory and practice in environmental studies. The program features four integrated courses, projects, field trips, guest lectures, and presentations.

The Chicago Studies Quarters are designed for undergraduates in good academic standing who have completed at least two quarters of study in the College. While the program stipulates no minimum grade-point average, an applicant’s transcript should demonstrate that the applicant is a serious student who will make the most of this opportunity. The Chicago Studies Quarters are open to University of Chicago undergraduate students only; applications from outside the University are not accepted. For more information, please contact Sabina Shaikh (sabina@uchicago.edu) or Emily Talen (talen@uchicago.edu), faculty directors for Chicago Studies.

Chicago Studies Course Cluster

In addition to the Chicago Studies Quarter, the College offers other courses that explore aspects of Chicago's ecology, culture, politics, history, social structure, and economic life. Many of these courses are cross-listed between departments, meaning many of them may fulfill requirements in multiple academic programs; most are integrated into the Urban Environments track of the Environmental and Urban Studies major. Some of them may also contribute to students’ completion of the academic requirements of the Chicago Studies Certificate Program (http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/certificate/courses). The courses listed here represent a sample of what is often available, depending on departmental offerings. Chicago-focused courses are identified as part of the Chicago Studies Course Cluster in the course registration system; thematic listings of such courses are also available on the Chicago Studies website (http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/cluster).

Historical, literary, artistic, or social scientific explorations of Chicago
Chicago Studies Certificate Program

Undergraduate students who wish to integrate their academic inquiry with positive impact in Chicago through sustained community engagement, urban scholarship, and creative expression have the opportunity pursue a certificate in Chicago Studies (http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/certificate).

Students may begin pursuing the Chicago Studies Certificate at any time during their College careers. This will require an initial (and highly preliminary) proposal for how one hopes to fulfill the requirements and an advising session to discuss the plan and resources available to support it. That mandatory advising is provided by the Chicago Studies staff, with a second required meeting before proposal of the capstone project.

Students who complete the certificate will have that designated on their transcript. The transcript designation and the certificate itself are standalone recognitions, conferred by the College and its partners without reference to students’ formal degree programs. However, completion of the Chicago Studies Certificate does fulfill the internship/field study requirement of the Environmental and Urban Studies major.

The Chicago Studies Certificate Program includes the following components:

1. Introductory Urban Impact Training Experiences (“Modules,” at least 3)
2. Chicago-Focused Courses (at least 3)
3. High-Impact Community Engagement
4. Capstone Project

1. Introductory Urban Impact Training Experiences (“Modules,” at least 3)

These not-for-credit, non-curricular introductory experiences—some of which may be facilitated by external organizations—expose students to local civic actors, leadership and research skills, and Chicago social issues, and are open to all University of Chicago students. As a first stage of the certificate, students must participate in three of these to help them frame, focus, and reflect on the kind of impact they hope to have as engaged scholars. At the end of this, students declare a focus for their certificate work: an issue, an organization, a neighborhood, a population.

A list of available urban impact training experiences (“modules”) may be found on the Chicago Studies Certificate Program website (http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/certificate/modules). A number of existing programs sponsored by Chicago Studies’ partners (both internal and external to the University) may also fulfill one or more of these requirements; students should discuss this during their initial advising appointment.

2. Chicago-Focused Courses (at least 3)

The Chicago Studies Certificate requires completion of three Chicago-focused courses with a C– or above. Successful completion of any of the Chicago Studies Quarters will satisfy this requirement, as will completion of an approved sequence of courses drawn from the Chicago Studies Course Cluster. In some cases, special permission may be granted for inclusion of one or more courses outside the cluster. Students not completing a formal Chicago Studies Quarter will need to propose and receive faculty approval for their chosen theme and receive subsequent approvals for each course chosen along the way.

Petitions should be made in advance of enrollment and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, in relation to the petitioner’s stated rationale for including specific courses in their program of study and engagement. The General Petition
Form (https://humanities-web.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/college-prod/s3fs-public/documents/GeneralPetition.pdf) is available on the College website and should be directed to Sabina Shaikh (sabina@uchicago.edu), faculty director for Chicago Studies. Advising on this academic component and selection of appropriate courses is available; visit the Chicago Studies website (http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/certificate/courses) for more information.

3. High-Impact Community Engagement

Program participants must demonstrate a sustained, impactful engagement with Chicago’s diverse communities in the following ways:

- complete at least 200 hours of community-benefiting engagement in Chicago; AND
- receive a positive recommendation from a community-based supervisor of or partner in their engagement; AND
- articulate both academic learning and skills development from this experience and its relevance to the student’s capstone project in a significant way.

Advising on the selection of appropriate engagement opportunities is available through UCSC. Some examples of existing opportunities that could fulfill this program requirement include:

- 200+ hours of documented volunteer engagement on a single community issue through leadership in a community service recognized student organization
- 200+ hours of student employment with a single community organization or on a single issue through community-based Federal Work-Study
- completion of the University Community Service Center's Summer Links (https://ucsc.uchicago.edu/page/summer-links-2017) internship and social justice education program
- completion of the Institute of Politics (http://politics.uchicago.edu) Summer Political Internship (in Chicago)
- completion of a Pozen Family Center (http://humanrights.uchicago.edu) Human Rights Internship (in Chicago)

Information about available and forthcoming engagement opportunities, as well as the mechanisms for their approval and documentation, can be found on the Chicago Studies Certificate Program website (http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/certificate/engagement); one-on-one advising with Chicago Studies staff is also available upon request.

4. Capstone Project

A Capstone Project is a high-impact learning practice that requires students to integrate, apply, and articulate their learning across a sequence of experiences. Many capstones will be completed during the fourth year of study, but it is possible to complete a capstone earlier.

To receive the Chicago Studies Certificate and transcript designation, program participants must successfully produce a major paper, project, or product (e.g., a discipline-based research project, investigative journalism series, creative production, action research product, etc.) that:

- integrates aspects of the student’s academic and community-based learning throughout the student’s fulfillment of previous certificate components; AND
- takes Chicago either as its focus OR uses it as a significant example (for works focused on broader urban themes); AND
- responds to a community-defined priority or question, including being presented as such to one or more relevant publics.

Advising on and approval of capstone project proposals is run by the Chicago Studies team, which can assist students in identifying appropriate community partners, issues, and audiences for capstones from Civic Engagement’s citywide network of collaborators. In the case of capstone projects based on or closely related to a student’s formal academic work (e.g., a BA thesis), capstone adjudication will assess only the capstone’s successful integration of the student’s academic and community-based learning, as required for the certificate. Such evaluations should not be taken as direction of the student’s formal discipline-based academic research.

In addition to on-campus presentation opportunities provided through Chicago Studies, students should also, whenever possible, directly present their capstones to relevant publics in the broader community as an expression of reciprocal benefit to those whose community-based knowledge has helped to inform their completion.

Questions about the Chicago Studies Certificate Program may be directed to Christopher Skrable (cskrable@uchicago.edu), Director of Chicago Studies and Experiential Learning in the College. Additional information is also available on the Chicago Studies website (http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu).

Primary Contacts

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Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

- Times was used instead of Trajan.
- Times was used instead of Palatino.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.