

# INSTITUTE ON THE FORMATION OF KNOWLEDGE

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Department Website: <http://ifk.uchicago.edu>

## INSTITUTE ON THE FORMATION OF KNOWLEDGE

A focal point for scholars to ask: What do we know and how do we know it?

This question is more confusing than ever, and answers are hard to come by. We face unreliable news, non-replicable scientific experiments, masses of data, groupthink, cultural relativism, confusion about values, entrenched beliefs, and more.

In such an environment we seek new methods for asking about the world. At the Institute on the Formation of Knowledge (<https://ifk.uchicago.edu/>) (IFK), we aim to understand how factors like history, politics, culture, and religion can shape knowledge—year in and year out, over decades and centuries. We believe that to understand a phenomenon, one must approach it from a number of different fields, and with sensitivity to context. As no area of knowledge arises in a vacuum, we underplay the division of knowledge into departments within the University. IFK's 40+ faculty members hail from 11 of the 12 schools and divisions across campus, spanning departments ranging from Anthropology and Art History to Law, Medicine, Social Thought, and Statistics, and challenging accepted perspectives within and outside the University. We foster collaborative inquiry to spark breakthroughs, create new fields of knowledge, and educate a new generation.

Join the IFK mailing list for updates on course offerings, awards, and workshops.

## INNOVATIVE COURSE OFFERINGS

Blast off in Explorations of Mars (<https://ifk.uchicago.edu/courses/results/search/eYjyZXN1bHRfcGFnZSI6ImNvdXJzZXNlL3Jlc3VsdHNcL3NIYXJjaCl5ImtleXdvcmlRzJjoiZXhwG9yYXRpb25zIG9mIG1hcnM=>) visit pathology and anatomy labs while researching humanistic archives in Human Bodies in History (<https://ifk.uchicago.edu/courses/results/search/eYjyZXN1bHRfcGFnZSI6ImNvdXJzZXNlL3Jlc3VsdHNcL3NIYXJjaCl5ImtleXdvcmlRzJjoiHVYlW4gYm9kaWVzIGluIGhpc3=>) create medical comics in [Re]Framing Graphic Medicine: Comics and the History of Medicine (<https://ifk.uchicago.edu/courses/results/search/eYjyZXN1bHRfcGFnZSI6ImNvdXJzZXNlL3Jlc3VsdHNcL3NIYXJjaCl5ImNhdGVnb3J5JoiM3w4OXwxMCl5ImtleXdvcmlRzJj=>) or build a course syllabus and commune in The Making and Breaking of Intentional Communities (<https://ifk.uchicago.edu/courses/results/search/eYjyZXN1bHRfcGFnZSI6ImNvdXJzZXNlL3Jlc3VsdHNcL3NIYXJjaCl5ImtleXdvcmlRzJjoiVWFraW5nIGJyZWFraW5nIGNvbW=>)

We offer undergraduate and graduate courses (<https://ifk.uchicago.edu/courses/>) across a wide range of disciplines that challenge conventional wisdom and bring new perspectives to some of the largest and most perennial questions, all bearing on what it means to be human in the 21st century.

Don't expect typical seminars or lectures in a KNOW course. Do expect a dynamic classroom with students from across campus —humanists, social science majors, and STEM majors --- engaging together in wide-ranging discussions, hands-on experiential learning, innovative pedagogical approaches, and field trips around campus labs and the city at large.

KNOW courses are taught by faculty with wide-ranging areas of expertise who bring new ways of knowledge production to the classroom.

## KNOW Course FAQ

- KNOW courses are cross-listed with a variety of departments, such as GNSE, CRES, ANTH, ENST, CMST, SOCI, CHDV, HLTH, HIST, and HIPs, so students can enroll in a course as a major course with their department's course number or as an elective with the KNOW course number.
- We offer courses in the Inquiry and Research in the Humanities (IRHUM) program (<https://college.uchicago.edu/academics/ir-hum/>)
- Additional courses are offered in our Experimental Capstone Curriculum (XCAP) (<https://ifk.uchicago.edu/courses/xcap/>) program, which brings practice together with theory, inside and outside the classroom.
- Undergraduate students can petition instructors for graduate-level courses.
- For up-to-date KNOW course listings, visit [ifk.uchicago.edu/courses](http://ifk.uchicago.edu/courses) (<https://ifk.uchicago.edu/courses/>).

## UNDERGRADUATE THESIS AWARD ON THE FORMATION OF KNOWLEDGE

The IFK Undergraduate Thesis Award (<https://ifk.uchicago.edu/funding-opportunities/undergraduate-thesis-award/>) is given annually to the best undergraduate thesis dealing with topics related to the social and historical influences shaping the formation of knowledge, and most effectively crossing disciplinary and divisional boundaries in its research, argument, and conclusions. The thesis may address any topic that has

implications for the formation of knowledge. The competition is open to University of Chicago undergraduate students in any division who are graduating at the end of the current academic year. \$1,000 for first place; \$500 for second place; and \$250 for third place.

#### BA/MA FORMATION OF KNOWLEDGE CONCENTRATION

IFK offers graduate-level seminars in the Formation of Knowledge concentration in the Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences (MAPSS), (<https://ifk.uchicago.edu/mapss/>) which undergraduates can take through petition with instructor consent. Interested students can also pursue a joint BA/MA in Social Sciences with a concentration on the Formation of Knowledge, in their fourth year.

