JOINT BA/MA IN DIGITAL STUDIES OF LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND HISTORY

ABOUT

Program Website: https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/

The Digital Studies curriculum is designed to develop not only technical programming skills, but a deeper understanding of the complexities and cultural implications of technology across a broad range of academic disciplines. Students in the Digital Studies program will discover how to use a wide variety of powerful software tools while learning how to think about computing from a humanistic perspective.

The Master of Arts Program in Digital Studies allows students in the College to combine a BA program in an undergraduate major with an interdisciplinary MA program in Digital Studies. The MA Program allows students flexibility to explore interests in a number of areas, including textual analysis, computational linguistics, historical or cultural studies, and digital arts and media.

Undergraduate students pursuing this option are in “concurrent residence” beginning in the Autumn Quarter of their fourth year at the University and remain in this status for three contiguous quarters.

WHERE TO BEGIN

Qualified students in the College who wish to pursue a joint BA/MA degree in Digital Studies should consult with their College Adviser and/or the College BA/MA Adviser, followed by conversations with the Digital Studies program director and the Dean of Students Office in the Division of the Humanities. Interested students are advised to begin these discussions in the Spring of their second year in the College.

Potential applicants should meet with the BA/MA Adviser in the College in the Autumn of their third year to fill out a BA/MA worksheet. The BA/MA Adviser’s signature certifies that prospective applicants are far enough along in their College program to complete the course requirements for both degrees within four years.

ELIGIBILITY

Permission to receive concurrent BA/MA degrees in Digital Studies is a privilege extended only to those undergraduate students who have demonstrated a record of uncommon excellence and who are sufficiently advanced in the fulfillment of the undergraduate degree requirements. The academic demands on these students are significant, and applicants are carefully reviewed in the context of both their undergraduate major and the Digital Studies degree requirements.

• Applicants should have a GPA of 3.55 or higher for their undergraduate work and are expected to have entered their major.
• Applicants are expected to have completed 39 of the 42 courses required for graduation, including all general education requirements (exceptions must be approved by the Digital Studies Program Director), before entering concurrent residence status for the three quarters preceding the anticipated quarter of graduation.

HOW TO APPLY

Interested students should apply through the online graduate application through the Humanities Division. The application should be completed by February 1.

Applicants must submit the following items:

• MA application
• Statement of academic purpose
• Three letters of recommendation
• Official transcript(s)
• BA/MA Worksheet, signed by the student’s College adviser

Applicants are not required to pay the application fee nor are they required to sit for the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).

Applicants will be interviewed by the Digital Studies program director. These conversations will focus on the program’s requirements and the applicant’s qualifications and objectives.

The application is evaluated by the admissions committee of the MA program on the basis of the student’s academic record, letters of recommendation, and personal statement of intellectual and academic goals. Admission to the MA program is highly competitive and subject to approval by the College.
Program Requirements

Course Requirements

- 9 courses over 4 academic quarters
- 7 required courses, 1 elective course, and 1 capstone project course. Two of the 7 required courses are introductions to computer programming and to statistics; students who have taken these courses to meet other requirements will substitute electives for them.
- The elective course(s) must have a digital component and are subject to approval by the Digital Studies program director. A list of approved electives can be found on the Digital Studies website. Courses taken prior to entry into the MA may be counted as electives to fulfill this requirement.

Course Sequence

The elective course may be taken in any quarter, subject to its own prerequisites.

Spring Quarter (or previously)
- Introduction to Computer Programming (or Computer Science with Applications-1 in a previous Autumn Quarter); knowledge of programming is a prerequisite for the Data Management course in the Autumn Quarter and for subsequent courses in the program

Autumn Quarter
- Statistical Methods and Applications; this may be taken in any quarter but no later than Autumn of the fourth year; it is a prerequisite for the Data Analysis course offered in the Winter Quarter
- Data Management for Linguistic, Cultural, and Historical Research

Winter Quarter
- Data Analysis for Linguistic, Cultural, and Historical Research
- Data Publication for Linguistic, Cultural, and Historical Research

Spring Quarter
- Natural Language Processing
- Issues in Digital Studies of Language, Culture, and History
- M.A. project preparation

Capstone Project

Students prepare their capstone projects under the supervision of a faculty member and a lecturer in Digital Studies. During the Winter and Spring Quarters, students consult with their faculty adviser as well as the lecturer in Digital Studies as they develop and write their theses. The lecturer will schedule biweekly individual and group meetings.

Students in a major in which a BA paper is required may (subject to the approval of their BA paper adviser, MA project adviser, undergraduate adviser, and the director of the MA program, and with the understanding that it is based on substantial additional research and analysis) submit an MA paper proposal related to their BA essay.

General Guidelines

- Students who begin work towards the MA in Digital Studies degree and then leave the University without completing the program will not be allowed to complete the MA in Digital Studies at a later date.
- Once a student has begun to pursue both the BA degree and the MA in Digital Studies a leave of absence is not normally possible. Students who find that they must take a leave of absence for a medical or family emergency during this period must obtain the approval of the dean of students in the Humanities as well as the dean of students in the College.
- Admissions decisions are usually not released before College preregistration for the following year takes place. Admissions committees often wish to see Winter Quarter grades before making decisions. Thus, applicants should preregister for the coming academic year as usual.