Joint BA/MA in Digital Studies of Language, Culture, and History

Department Website: https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/bama

About

The Digital Studies of Language, Culture, and History 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 of Language, Culture, and History 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.

Where to Begin

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

Potential applicants should meet with their College adviser during the Autumn Quarter of their third year to confirm that they 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 academic 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 Humanities online graduate application at https://humanities.uchicago.edu/students/admissions/apply-now. The application must be submitted by February 1 in order for the student to be informed of the admission decision before the end of the Winter Quarter.

Applicants must submit the following items:

- MA application
- Statement of academic purpose
- Two letters of recommendation
- Official transcript(s)

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 academic 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

- Students pursuing the joint BA/MA in Digital Studies are required to complete the six core courses and three elective courses prescribed for the MA in Digital Studies, and to complete a thesis project.
- One of the three elective courses must have a digital component. All electives are subject to approval by the Digital Studies academic director. A list of approved electives can be found on the Digital Studies website. Courses taken prior to entry into the MA program may be counted as electives to fulfill this requirement.
- Courses taken to fulfill the requirements of other programs may be counted toward the Digital Studies course requirements, subject to approval by the Director of Digital Studies. However, no more than 300 units of course credit (typically three 100-unit courses) may be double-counted in this way.
- Two of the core courses required for the MA in Digital Studies are DIGS 20001 Introduction to Computer Programming, in which students learn the Python programming language, and DIGS 20002 Data Analysis for the Humanities I, which covers basic statistics. Both of these courses are taught annually in the Autumn Quarter and are open to all undergraduate and graduate students. However, undergraduates who plan to do the BA/MA in Digital Studies are encouraged to take the equivalent courses in the Departments of Computer Science and Statistics, listed below:
  - CMSC 12100 Computer Science with Applications I, or CMSC 15100 Introduction to Computer Science I, or CMSC 16100 Honors Introduction to Computer Science I, may be taken in lieu of DIGS 20001. Note that students who have taken CMSC 15100 or CMSC 16100, which do not use Python, must learn Python on their own before taking the Digital Studies core courses.
  - STAT 22000 Statistical Methods and Applications or a more advanced STAT course, may be taken in lieu of DIGS 20002 Data Analysis for the Humanities I. Note that STAT 20000 Elementary Statistics is not accepted as a substitute for DIGS 20002.

Course Sequence

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

Autumn Quarter

- DIGS 30001 Introduction to Computer Programming
  - CMSC 12100, CMSC 15100, CMSC 16100, or an equivalent course may be taken in lieu of DIGS 30001.
- DIGS 10000 (a remote-only course taught during the Summer Session) may be taken in lieu of DIGS 30001.
- DIGS 30002 Data Analysis for the Humanities I
  - STAT 22000 or an equivalent or more advanced statistics course (but not STAT 20000) may be taken in lieu of DIGS 30002.
- DIGS 30007 Introduction to Digital Humanities

Winter Quarter

- DIGS 30003 Data Management for the Humanities
- DIGS 30004 Data Analysis for the Humanities II
- An approved elective course (for the general MA), or NEAA 30061 Ancient Landscapes I (for the MA in Digital Archaeology), or a CMST course on digital media (for the MA in Digital Media), or DIGS 30031 Digital Texts I: Opening New Paths for Textual Scholarship

Spring Quarter

- DIGS 30005 Data Publication for the Humanities
- DIGS 30006 Data Analysis for the Humanities III: Deep Learning
- An approved elective course (for the general MA), or DIGS 30021 Digital Archaeology (for the MA in Digital Archaeology), or an approved CMST course on digital media (for the MA in Digital Media), or DIGS 30032 Digital Texts II

Thesis Project

The Digital Studies MA program entails a thesis project advised by a University of Chicago faculty member, instructional professor, or lecturer. Information about the thesis requirement and related deadlines can be found on the Digital Studies MA Thesis webpage.

BA/MA students who are pursuing a BA major in which a BA paper or senior thesis is required may do an MA thesis project on a topic related to the BA paper, subject to the approval of their BA adviser and the Director of Digital Studies, with the understanding that the MA thesis will entail substantial additional research and analysis.
The MA thesis is due May 15 for June graduation or June 15 for August graduation. Students who do not complete their MA thesis by May 15 will not receive the MA degree at the Convocation ceremony in June (https://convocation.uchicago.edu/) but will receive the BA degree if they have completed all their BA requirements; in that case, the MA degree will be awarded later, after the MA thesis has been completed and deemed acceptable.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Students who begin work toward the MA in Digital Studies and then leave the University without completing the program will not be allowed to complete the MA program at a later date.
- A leave of absence is not normally possible after a student has begun to pursue both the BA degree and the MA in Digital Studies. 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 Division of 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.
- For each of the three quarters in which students are registered in the Digital Studies MA program, they pay tuition at the graduate tuition rate, which is somewhat higher than the undergraduate tuition rate. Students are not eligible for financial assistance from the Humanities Division. However, any awards a student receives from College Aid will continue in the MA year.