Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences

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- Dain Borges

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Managing Director

- Chad Cyrenne

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- Morrie Fred, Anthropology
- Victor Lima, Economics
Lecturers

- Darcy Heuring, History
- Melissa Tartari, Economics

Earl S. Johnson Instructors

- Samantha Fan, Psychology
- Francis Mckay, Anthropology
- TBD, Sociology

Preceptors

- Theresa Anasti, Sociology
- Gordon Arlen, Political Science
- Amanda Blair, Political Science
- Marcus Board, Political Science/Sociology
- Laura Horton, Comparative Human Development
- Taeju Kim, History
- John McCallum, History
- Jay Schutte, Anthropology
- Xiao-bo Yuan, Anthropology

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General Information

The MA Program in the Social Sciences (MAPSS) is an intense, intellectually transformative one-year program. Students concentrate in anthropology, economics, history, political science, psychology, sociology, or in interdisciplinary research. They take nine graduate courses, selected from all UChicago departments and professional schools. They work directly with UChicago faculty on the MA thesis.

Students are assisted in their course selections, and offered weekly mentorship for their research, by doctoral student “preceptors” and by the MAPSS senior staff.

MAPSS is highly selective for admission and offers substantial merit aid, from partial to full tuition grants.

We offer preeminent training for those aspiring to go on for funded PhD study in the social sciences. Each year 55-70 of our graduates do so successfully, at a 91% placement rate. More than 100 MAPSS graduates are pursuing the PhD at UChicago alone.

MAPSS also offers an exceptional program of career placement, working directly with our Director of Career Services, with weekly workshops, on-campus recruitment, and visits by leading alumni who provide mentorship in a variety of fields.

Each student works closely with the program directors, our senior academic staff, and an assigned preceptor, designing a customized curriculum, defining an area of scholarly research, and writing the MA thesis.

A joint BA/MA and several dual degree options – in Booth and Harris – are also available.

Program Requirements and Course Work

MAPSS students must complete our core course, satisfy our methods requirement, and earn a minimum B as their cumulative grade over their nine graduate courses. Students must also submit a faculty-approved MA thesis.

Course Work

Our core course, “Perspectives in Social Science Analysis,” examines the theoretical approaches that have been broadly influential across the social sciences. It features a mix of foundational and contemporary texts. The course furnishes a common vocabulary, and core analytical skills, that help students understand how their research commitments have been shaped by past investigators.
Because Perspectives is offered only in the Autumn Quarter, students may not begin the MAPSS program at any other time of year.

Students must also fulfill a methods requirement. MAPSS offers courses in historical, ethnographic, statistical, and interpretive methods. Dozens of other methods courses, from network analysis, game theory, involved interviewing, comparative case study, rational choice, comparative historical analysis, experimental methods, organizational analysis, survey research, and statistical methods are offered across campus each year.

Courses are selected with the guidance of a MAPSS preceptor. Students register for three graduate classes per quarter, beginning in the Fall and continuing through the Winter and Spring. They take graduate courses in all departments and professional schools of the University.

The Master’s Thesis

Students write an article-length MA thesis under the supervision of any UChicago faculty member. Their preceptor provides weekly assistance, and serves as the paper’s second reader.

The preceptor organizes and leads an MA proposal workshop in the Winter.

Both the faculty sponsor and the preceptor provide feedback on the proposal, the first draft, and give a written evaluation and letter grade for the final submission.

Approximately 20% of MAPSS students graduate in June, and 80% in August.

Sample Thesis Topics

Our Economics concentration is new in 2016. Elsewhere, some recent MA paper titles include:

"Class or Group Identity? Rethinking the 1967-69 Ocean Hill-Brownsville School Strikes for Left Coalitional Politics"

"Poisoned Futures: Pesticide Usage and Agrarian Suicides in Vidarbha, India"

"Performing at Free Street: At-Risk Adolescents’ Experiences in a Dramatic Arts Program"

"Deepening Democracy or Diverting Attention? Participatory Democracy and the Community Council Movement in Venezuela"
"Pricing the Atmosphere: Commensuration and the Case of the Chicago Climate Exchange"

"Democratic Leadership in Athens and its Role in Thucydides’ Political Thought"

"The Socialization of Math Anxiety: The Relationship Between Early Math Talk and Later Math Attitudes"

"Capacity and the Duty to Intervene: Considerations on the Agency Problem of Humanitarian Intervention"

"Neural Activity Reflecting Affective Impact of Addressee and Emotional Words in Speech Perception"

"Intimate Segregation: Gentrification and the New Landscape of Race"

Admission

MAPSS applicants must meet the formal requirements of the Graduate Social Sciences Division.

All applicants must submit GRE scores, except for those applying for the joint BA/MA degree.

All financial aid is merit-based, and MAPSS offers partial and full tuition scholarships at the time of admission.

Joint BA/MA applicants pay graduate tuition rates, and are eligible to receive the same aid they had in the College.

Applicants from non-English speaking countries must provide evidence of English proficiency by submitting scores from either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Some non-native English speakers are exempt, if they have studied in an English language University. Please contact our Dean of Students Office with any questions: admissions@ssd.uchicago.edu

Part-time study is possible, but part-time students are not eligible for financial aid.
How to Apply

The Application for Admission and Financial Aid, with instructions and deadlines, is available online at: https://apply-ssd.uchicago.edu/apply/.

For additional information about our program, please contact E.G. Enbar, our Student Affairs Administrator, at 773-702-8312 or egenbar@uchicago.edu.

Please also visit our website, at: http://mapss.uchicago.edu/

Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences Courses

MAPS 30000. Perspectives in Social Science Analysis. 100 Units.
This course presents a set of perspectives that can be used as coordinates to map the modern social sciences. Perspectives are stances from which social thinkers see the world and explain the world. The course is meant to bring students together around a shared reading list of foundational works and exemplary research and to develop a shared vocabulary for how to discuss differences among various types of research.
Instructor(s): Dain Borges Terms Offered: Autumn

MAPS 30200. Readings: Social Sciences. 100 Units.
Individualized and independent reading course with selected faculty.
Instructor(s): Dain Borges Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): Open only to MAPSS students.

MAPS 30600. Readings: MA Paper Research. 100 Units.
Student initiated research and writing for the MA thesis.
Instructor(s): Dain Borges Terms Offered: Autumn

MAPS 30700. Foundations of Human Rights. 100 Units.
This seminar will provide graduate students with an advanced introduction to the study of human rights, with a particular emphasis on locating contemporary issues and debates within the historical development of human rights discourses. As a graduate seminar, this will be a small class (capped at 20 students), and a strong emphasis will be placed on in-class discussion and debate. Together we will explore the historical foundations of human rights from a range of disciplinary perspectives.
Instructor(s): A. Etinson Terms Offered: Autumn 2015
Note(s): Graduate students only
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 67102, PHIL 31620, PLSC 31700, HMRT 30600
MAPS 31500. Historical Methods. 100 Units.
This course analyzes key methodological and conceptual problems that all historians must confront, whether we are medievalists or modernists. These include problems of structure and agency, anachronism, how to use non-textual evidence, and how to approach elusive cultural phenomena such as perceptions, attitudes and sentiments. We will examine some of the myriad ways that a range of historians have approached these problems, and in the process attempt to illuminate the complex relationship between sources, methods and theory in our own work. Ultimately, the course seeks to provide you with methodological, theoretical and conceptual tools useful in formulating and executing a substantial historical research project. Participation is absolutely essential to the success of the course, and will be evaluated as a significant part of your grade.
Instructor(s): Darcy Heuring Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): Open to MAPSS students only.

MAPS 31600. Ethnographic Methods. 100 Units.
As ethnography has matured over the past century, it has also extended itself into all corners of academia, becoming a cornerstone for empirical research not just in anthropology, but the humanities, social sciences, professional schools, and at times the natural sciences as well. What, then, is the appeal of this process of knowledge production? What are the norms of ethnographic research? And what does it take to become a skilled ethnographer? This course will attempt to answer those questions through a mixture of theory and practice. Each week we will discuss foundational anthropological texts on method, complemented with practicums and workshops, during which students will apply the theoretical insights gained from their readings to their own empirical research projects. The course will cover both the practicalities of fieldwork (how to find and get access to a site, how to build rapport with informants and make lasting contacts, how to conduct different kinds of interviews, etc), as well as the deeper ethical, epistemological and ontological issues raised by ethnography (the problems of representation, the ethics of participant observation, the subject position of the ethnographer). Through that students will learn how to embody a rigorous, theoretically informed, and critically reflective methodological practice and will demonstrate a skilled understanding of this through their own “mini-ethnography,” which will be undertaken on a topic of their choosing.
Instructor(s): F.Mckay Terms Offered: Autumn

MAPS 31701. Data Analysis & Statistics. 100 Units.
This course is designed for graduate students and advanced undergraduate students and aims to provide a strong foundation in the statistical and data analyses commonly used in the behavioral and social sciences. Topics include logistic regression, statistical inference, chi-square, analysis of variance, and repeated measures models. In addition, this course also place greater emphasis on developing practical skills, including the ability to conduct common analyses using statistical software. You will learn how to build models to investigate your data, formulate hypothesis tests as comparisons between statistical models and critically evaluate model assumptions. The goal of the course is for students to be able to define and use descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze and interpret statistical findings.
Instructor(s): Peishan Fan Terms Offered: Autumn
MAPS 31702. Data Science. 100 Units.
This course is a graduate-level methods class that aims to train you to solve real-world statistical problems. The goal of the course is for students to be able to choose an appropriate statistical method to solve a given problem of data analysis and communicate your results clearly and succinctly. There will be an extensive hands-on experience of analysis of real data through practical classes.
Instructor(s): Peishan Fan Terms Offered: Winter

MAPS 31750. Data Analysis for Social Research. 100 Units.
The purpose of this course is help students build a solid foundation of statistical methods for social research and become proficient in using computer software for survey data analysis. Techniques acquired in this class are essential for social scientific research, and in graduate programs in sociology and professional schools such as social work, as well as job market positions which require basic to intermediate quantitative skills. Topics of this course range from the nuts and bolts of probability distributions and statistical inference to multivariate regression and its diagnostics. This course is intensive and moves pretty fast, and students are expected to work hard to have these skills “imprinted” in their minds. Further, students will have the opportunity to conduct a mini-research exercise in the second half of this course.
Instructor(s): Muh-Chung Lin Terms Offered: Autumn

MAPS 31800. Interpretive Methods in Political Theory. 100 Units.
This seminar offers a graduate-level survey of the major interpretive schools in contemporary political thought. We’ll ask what makes each camp so attractive to its adherents; what methodological assumptions, evidentiary warrants, and technical skills are today associated with leading practitioners; what controversies divide one alternative from the next; and how to reproduce particular methodological orientations in your research. We will also revisit some fundamental questions: What do we expect good political theory to do? What falls within the “political” that it interrogates and describes? Should political theory take its bearings from history, philosophy, or empirical social science? Readings will be drawn from the Cambridge Historians, Straussians, Critical Theory, Discourse Ethics, Genealogy, Analytic Philosophy, Feminism, Social Interpretivism, Phenomenology, and Literary/Cultural Narrativism.
Instructor(s): Chad Cyrenne Terms Offered: Autumn
MAPS 32200. Anthropology and ‘The Good Life’: Ethics, Morality, Well-Being. 100 Units.
This course takes a critical, historical and anthropological look at what is meant by “the good life.” Anthropologists have long been aware that notions of “the good” play an essential role in directing human behavior, by providing a life with meaning and shaping what it means to be a human being. Over the past several years, however, there has been an increasing demand for clarification on what is meant by “the good life,” as well as how cultural conceptions of “the good” relate to science, politics, religion, and personal practice. In this course, we will take up that challenge by exploring what is meant by “the good,” focusing on three domains in which it has most productively been theorized: ethics, morality, and well-being. Through a close reading of ethnographic and theoretical texts, as well as through analysis of documents and resources used and produced by different communities in order to explore the good life, we will gain an understanding of the different theoretical and methodological approaches for understanding the good in the social sciences, the various cultural logics shaping knowledge and practices of the good, and how human experience is shaped by those iterations in the process. The topics to be discussed include: the good life, moral reason, moral relativism, utility, deontology, virtue, happiness, well-being, flourishing, techniques of the self, spiritual exercises, professional ethics, neuroethics, and the moral sentiments.
Instructor(s): Francis Mckay Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): Upper-level undergrads by consent. Some knowledge of moral philosophy useful, but not necessary to take the course. CHDV Distribution: C*; 3*
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 24345, ANTH 35130, CHDV 32200

MAPS 32700. The Emotions: Science, Culture, and Mental Health. 100 Units.
This course looks at how different forms of emotional experience (feelings, emotions, affects, sentiments, and moods), have been theorized in anthropology since the 1970s, particularly in relation to science, culture and mental health. Drawing on phenomenological, psychological and medical approaches in anthropology, as well as work in science studies, students will have the opportunity to examine how anthropologists have tried to go beyond the classic binaries that have often defined emotion research in the West (such as those between universality and relativism, body and mind, nature and culture, etc.), how they try to connect emotions to the larger social world (through various descriptions of public or political sentiments), and how they conceptualize so-called “affective disorders” such as depression, anxiety and trauma.
Instructor(s): Francis McKay Terms Offered: Spring
MAPS 32800. Phenomenology & Madness-Perspectives from Cultural Psychiatry. 100 Units.
This course provides students with theoretical and methodological grounding in phenomenological approaches to cultural psychiatry, examining how anthropologists and social scientists more generally have tried to describe the lived experiences of various forms of “psychopathology” or “madness.” Though the course focuses largely on phenomenological approaches within anthropology, students will also gain exposure to a mixed methodological approach, embracing philosophy, science studies, history, psychiatry, and cognitive science. By the end of the course, students will have learned how to describe and analyze the social dimension of a mental health experience, using a mixed methods approach, and using a technical vocabulary for understanding the lived experiences of mental illness (including: phenomena, life-world, being-in-the-world, epoche, embodiment, madness, psychopathology, melancholia/depression, schizophrenia, etc). Students will also present their work at the end of quarter in a creative medium appropriate to that analysis, during a final-week mock-workshop.
Instructor(s): F. McKay Terms Offered: Spring

MAPS 34600. Anthropology of Museums I. 100 Units.
Instructor(s): M. Fred Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Advanced standing and consent of instructor

MAPS 36400. Aging and the Life Course. 100 Units.
Over the last few decades, life course has become an important perspective for sociologists, demographers, and gerontologists to understand the social processes of aging. This seminar course introduces key concepts of the theories of aging and the life course, as well as empirical findings on the social, demographic, and economic aspects of the demographics of aging. While biology and physiology play crucial role in aging, such as greater longevity and the delayed onset of morbidity, this course focuses on the social processes of aging and the role of social stratification in shaping health and well-being. In addition, this course will discuss the policy implications of aging.
Instructor(s): Muh-Chung Lin Terms Offered: Spring

MAPS 36900. Anthropology of Disability. 100 Units.
This seminar undertakes to explore “disability” from an anthropological perspective that recognizes it as a socially constructed concept with implications for our understanding of fundamental issues about culture, society, and individual differences. We explore a wide range of theoretical, legal, ethical, and policy issues as they relate to the experiences of persons with disabilities, their families, and advocates. The final project is a presentation on the fieldwork.
Instructor(s): M. Fred Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing
Note(s): CHDV Distribution: C, D; 4
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 20405, ANTH 30405, CHDV 30405, HMRT 25210, HMRT 35210, SOSC 36900, CHDV 20505
MAPS 37000. Freud's Interpretation of Dreams. 100 Units.
Freud himself described *The Interpretation of Dreams* as the repository of the “greatest discoveries” he was destined to make about the human psyche and the human condition. As a Fundamentals course, we will analyze this text as an autonomous whole, line by line, and, reflexively, argumentative filament by filament. As a classic of modern social thought, we will explore the proposition that *The Interpretation of Dreams* is, however inadvertently, the greatest single work on “culture,” conceived as a semiotic system, ever written. Iconic writing, that is to say the capacity and the constraints of conveying bodily experience in words, will be a special focus of our reading.
Instructor(s): J. MacAlloon Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): Open only to graduate students and 3rd and 4th year undergraduates.
Equivalent Course(s): FNDL 29605

MAPS 40200. Seminar: Bourdieu/Sociobiography. 100 Units.
This seminar explores the conceptual architecture of Pierre Bourdieu’s social theory, with special attention to its implications for biography and autobiography.
Instructor(s): John J MacAlloon Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): Graduate Students Only.
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 40165

MAPS 44100. The Politics of Value Pluralism. 100 Units.
Value pluralism – the idea that difficult moral questions may have more than one right answer, that some of those answers conflict, and that there may be no rationally authoritative way of choosing between them – has attracted increasing attention from political theorists and philosophers. If true, this non-obvious and heterodox view raises significant challenges for political practice. How can we engage our fellow citizens rationally, if we do not share their moral assumptions, aims, or evidentiary authorities? On what basis can we hold political authorities accountable, if we cannot agree on the same moral criteria to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate uses of political power? If difficult moral questions permit more than one right answer, will that encourage practices of toleration and generosity, or the brute force of majority preference? This seminar will ask what value pluralism really means, what evidence we have for it, and what consequences it entails for a liberal politics.
Instructor(s): Chad Cyrenne Terms Offered: Winter
MAPS 47501. Anthropology of Olympic Sport. 100 Units.
If cultural differences are as powerful as Anthropology has conventionally stressed, how is it possible that over 200 national and innumerable sub-national and transnational cultural formations have found common cause in the modern Olympic Games? This course explores, theoretically and historically, the emergence of the Olympic Games as the liturgy of the world system of nation states and the current dialectic between the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Sports Industry. Extensive reading and an independent research paper will be required.
Instructor(s): John J MacAlloon Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): 3rd and 4th year undergraduates only
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 20420, ANTH 30420
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.