

INSTITUTE ON THE FORMATION OF KNOWLEDGE

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

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Executive Director

- Macol Stewart Cerda

The Institute on the Formation of Knowledge (IFK) opened in the fall of 2015 at the University of Chicago as a focal point for scholars to ask, What do we know?

In the current era, 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, we aim to understand how factors like history, politics, culture and religion can shape knowledge — year in and year out, over decades, over centuries. We believe that to understand a phenomenon, one must approach 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, offering KNOW classes that bring together perspectives from a number of fields. IFK Core Faculty members hail from across the University, bringing a wide range of viewpoints and scholarly pursuits to the teaching, research, and conversation of the institute.

Join us for a KNOW class as we try to find new answers to some of the largest and most perennial questions, all bearing on what it means to be human in the 21st century. We offer undergraduates and graduate students team-taught classes that challenge conventional wisdom across the board.

KNOW courses are cross-listed with a variety of departments, so students can enroll in them as a major course with their department's course number or as an elective with the KNOW course number. For graduate students, we offer a number of cross-listed seminars as well as an annual core sequence in topics in the formation of knowledge (KNOW 401, 402, 403). These seminars are open to all graduate students regardless of field of study. In addition, we offer an interdisciplinary concentration in the MAPSS program; these courses are open to and available to all graduate students as well.

For up-to-date course listings, visit ifk.uchicago.edu/courses (<https://sifk.uchicago.edu/courses/>).

DEPARTMENTAL CONTACTS

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