Master of Arts in Latin American Studies - Social Sciences

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The Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) offers a one-year Master of Arts program (https://clas.uchicago.edu/academic-programs/MA-programs) in Latin American and Caribbean Studies that provides individualized, interdisciplinary training for students who plan to pursue career paths for which an MA is advantageous and students who plan to move on to doctoral programs in related fields. Students benefit from various resources that put the University of Chicago at the forefront of research and scholarship on Latin America, including world renowned faculty, top quality library resources, graduate workshops, and field research grant opportunities.

Admission to the Master’s Program

Prospective students to the Master of Arts program in Latin American Studies may apply to the program through the Division of the Social Sciences or through the Division of the Humanities and will receive the degree from the division through which they have been admitted.

How to Apply

The application process for admission and financial aid for all graduate programs in is administered through the divisional Office of the Dean of Students. The Application for Admission and Financial Aid, with instructions, deadlines and department specific information is available online:
Division of the Humanities (http://humanities.uchicago.edu/students/admissions/apply-now)
Social Sciences Division (https://apply-ssd.uchicago.edu/apply)

International students 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). Current minimum scores, etc., are provided with the application. For more information, please see the Office of International Affairs website (https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/english-language-requirements) or call them at (773) 702-7752.

Students who wish to earn a Ph.D. degree should apply to a degree program in one of the graduate departments or committees in the Division of the Humanities or the Division of the Social Sciences. International students are advised that completion of a master’s degree program is generally not a prerequisite to entering a Ph.D. program.

Program Requirements

Upon entering the program, students will work under academic direction of the CLAS Student Affairs Coordinator and the CLAS Lecturer to develop a specific program of study, cultivate their research interests, and identify a faculty adviser for their master’s paper. The basic components of the master’s program are described below.

Language

A fundamental requirement of the program is proficiency in one of the spoken languages (other than English) of Latin America and the Caribbean. This requirement normally will be met in Spanish or Portuguese. However, substitution of an Amerindian language (such as Aymara, K’iche’ Maya, or Yucatec Maya) or a language spoken in the Caribbean (such as Haitian Kreyol) is permissible with the approval of the program adviser. Petitions for substitution will be evaluated in light of the student’s prior competency and curricular program and the adequacy of instructional resources in the substitute language. Advanced Proficiency Examinations will be administered to evaluate the entering student’s language skills. Students usually meet the language requirement through the Advanced Proficiency Examination in Spanish or Portuguese.

MA students are eligible to participate in the Chicago Language Center’s Summer Language Institute (https://summerlanguages.uchicago.edu/page/about-sli) in the summer prior to or following matriculation at the University.

Course Requirements

The standard course requirement is nine quarter courses, to be met as follows:

The MA Proseminar in Latin American Studies

Through the required common core of the master’s program, LACS 40501 MA Proseminar, students gain an introduction to the variety of disciplinary approaches, discourses, and foci that fall under the large rubric of Latin American Studies. The Proseminar introduces students to specialists in the field at the University of Chicago and to the research in which they are involved. Led by the CLAS lecturer, the Proseminar meets every week in the Autumn quarter and every other week during the Winter quarter. The Winter quarter helps students further focus their thesis projects and technical skills. Students receive a grade for the Proseminar at the end of Winter quarter.
Three Latin American content courses

Each quarter CLAS compiles a list of courses University-wide with Latin American content. Courses that focus on disciplinary, methodological, or comparative topics may also be counted toward this requirement, provided the student completes a paper or other major project on a Latin American theme.

One course on Pre-20th Century Latin America

Students are required to take one approved course whose subject matter addresses pre-twentieth-century Latin America. The recommended course is LACS 16200 Introduction to Latin American Civilization II but students may select another course based on their needs and interests. Students whose undergraduate transcripts indicate sufficient background from previous equivalent courses will be exempt from this requirement and will be allowed to take other LACS content courses instead.

One course on Pre-20th Century Latin America

Students are required to take LACS 16300 Introduction to Latin American Civilization III. Students whose undergraduate transcripts indicate sufficient background from previous equivalent courses will be exempt from this course and will be allowed to take another approved LACS course on contemporary Latin America.

One methodology course

Students are required to take a minimum of one methodology course to supplement disciplinary knowledge, technical skills, or language skills. Courses may address a range of topics, from a GIS sequence to qualitative data analysis, ethnographic methods to historiography, Spanish for business to academic and professional writing. Student needs are assessed during admissions: applicant transcripts are reviewed and courses are recommended based on gaps in undergraduate education. CLAS works with departments who sponsor relevant courses to secure places in courses that fit individual student needs.

Two elective courses

These courses may, but are not required to, have Latin American content. They are often taken in order to gain a specific disciplinary grounding, explore a theoretical framework, or develop skills in a research methodology.

Credits towards the Master of Arts in Latin American Studies must be taken at the graduate level (courses designated as 30000 or above). However, certain lower level courses may be accepted, at the discretion of the program adviser. All course requirements can be met in three academic quarters.

Courses

Courses pertinent to the Latin America are offered through the individual departments and committees of the Divisions of the Social Sciences and the Humanities, and through the University’s professional schools. Please refer to the listings in these announcements and in the quarterly course schedules for specific offerings. Additionally, special courses are offered by senior visiting Latin Americanist faculty through the Center’s Tinker Visiting Professorship. Each quarter the Center compiles a comprehensive list of Latin American and Caribbean courses to be offered at the University available on the CLAS (https://clas.uchicago.edu) webpage or through my.uchicago.edu.

The Master’s Paper

Every master’s degree candidate is required to submit a master’s thesis paper. The paper uses theoretically informed analysis or interpretation to explore a significant problem, event, issue, process, relationship, or institution in Latin America and/or the Caribbean. The paper provides the opportunity to apply disciplined research skills and critical abilities to a specific topic of the student’s choice. Students will develop a thesis topic and outline during the MA Proseminar. The research and writing of this paper will be conducted under the guidance of a faculty adviser and the CLAS Postdoctoral Lecturer. A student may register for the course LACS 40300 Master’s Paper Preparation, which is arranged on an individual basis with the faculty adviser for the project. This course, while optional, may be counted as one of the five required Latin American Studies core courses.

For additional information about the Master of Arts in Latin American Studies program, please see visit the CLAS website (https://clas.uchicago.edu) or contact CLAS Student Affairs Coordinator Jamie Gentry at jagentry@uchicago.edu.
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