Master of Arts Program in the Humanities

Director

- Hilary Strang, Lecturer, English Language and Literature

Overview

The Master of Arts Program in the Humanities (MAPH) is an intensive one-year interdisciplinary program leading to the A.M. degree. MAPH is designed to address the diverse needs and interests of intellectual generalists and specialists who may benefit from a year of intensive work in the humanities. Many MAPH students are recent college graduates. Others are professionals at mid-career, freelance writers, or performers. They hold undergraduate degrees from public and private institutions throughout the world in disciplines ranging from biology to English to marketing. Others come with extensive experience in non-academic fields, including independent film-making, politics, science, non-profit work, and business.

Many students in MAPH plan to continue their studies at the doctoral level in preparation for a career in teaching and research. For these students, MAPH provides an ideal setting for clarifying their academic and professional goals and offers a year of intensive preparation for competitive Ph.D. programs.

MAPH’s emphasis on critical writing, analytical thinking, scholarly research, and flexible cultural perspectives is invaluable for students interested in careers at cultural institutions, in publishing, journalism, business, politics, secondary and community college teaching, or the full spectrum of the nonprofit sector.

Degree Requirements

Requirements for the degree include:

- The fall quarter MAPH Core Course, Foundations of Interpretive Theory (known to MAPH students as “Core”). Core begins two weeks before regular University classes and covers seminal works by thinkers such as Freud, Lacan, and Marx. It is taught by the MAPH Faculty Director and Deputy Director and may include guest lectures by distinguished faculty members from different disciplines. The course is designed to give MAPH students a shared base for their further study.

- Seven elective courses chosen from the Division of the Humanities, Social Sciences, or the other divisions and professional schools. The choice of these courses is left largely to the student, although a program of study will be designed in consultation with and approved by the student’s preceptor and other faculty advisers. Some students concentrate their courses in one field of study; others take a wide-ranging variety of courses in multiple disciplines. Most programs of study fall somewhere in between these two extremes.

- A master’s thesis of 25 to 35 pages, produced under the supervision of a faculty thesis adviser and a preceptor, and completed toward the end of the spring quarter. In conjunction with thesis preparation, students take a thesis workshop, which involves small group meetings focused on the development of thesis topics and the writing of the thesis. MAPH thesis projects range from traditional research papers to creative works accompanied by a critical assessment.

Two-Year Language Option

MAPH offers students the option to intensively study language over the course of two academic years and three summers through the Two-Year Language Option (TLO). TLO students complete the traditional MAPH curriculum during their first academic year, but must also take one language course at the intermediate or advanced level each quarter. During the second year, students take nine courses, six of which must be continued language study. Students have the option to take courses through the Summer Language Institute or to study abroad for three summers -- the summer before the program begins, the summer between the first and second academic year, and the summer following the second academic year.

Preceptors

Preceptors are advanced graduate students or recent Ph.D. graduates who oversee the progress of 10-12 MAPH students. Each student is assigned a preceptor for the academic year. In addition to serving as a general adviser, the preceptor leads small discussion groups in connection with the Core course and leads the winter and spring thesis workshops. Preceptors also may teach courses in the winter and spring quarters specially designed for MAPH students.

Admission

Applicants to MAPH must meet the general divisional requirements for admission and must submit a critical writing sample of no more than 15 pages. Students applying to the MAPH Creative Writing Option
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must also submit a substantial creative writing sample in their chosen genre (e.g., several poems, a short story, a chapter from a work of longer fiction in progress, a play, or a 10-15 page work of creative nonfiction).

INFORMATION ON HOW TO APPLY

The application process for admission and financial aid for all graduate programs in the Humanities 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 at: http://humanities.uchicago.edu/students/admissions.

Questions pertaining to admissions and aid should be directed to humanitiesadmissions@uchicago.edu or (773) 702-1552.

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 at https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu, or call them at (773) 702-7752.

CONTACT INFORMATION

maph.uchicago.edu (http://maph.uchicago.edu/)
ma-humanities@uchicago.edu
(773) 834-1201

MAPH COURSES

MAPH 30100. Foundations of Interpretive Theory. 100 Units.
The MAPH Core Course, Foundations of Interpretive Theory, begins two weeks before regular University classes and covers seminal works by thinkers such as Freud, Lacan, and Marx. It is taught by the MAPH Director and Deputy Director and may include guest lectures by distinguished faculty members from different disciplines. The course is designed to give MAPH students a shared base for their further study.
Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 34100

MAPH 30200. Thesis Writing Workshop A. 000 Units.
MAPH students begin work on their MA thesis.
Terms Offered: Autumn Spring Summer Winter

MAPH 30400. Thesis Writing Workshop B. 100 Units.
MAPH students complete their MA thesis.
Terms Offered: Autumn Spring Summer Winter

MAPH 39900. Independent Study: MAPH. 100 Units.
Independent reading and research course; regular meetings with a faculty supervisor required.

MAPH 30300. Prep of M.A. Thesis: MAPH. 100 Units.
Preparation of MA thesis is a course only offered if a student has a special research component related to the thesis. It is very rarely used and there is no standing course description because it will vary with the student.

MAPH 34800. Poetics. 100 Units.
In this course, we will study poetry ‘in the abstract’, through the various efforts on the part of philosophers, literary critics and poets themselves to formulate theories of poetic discourse. We will examine a range of historical attempts to conceptualize poetry as a particular kind of language practice, starting from German Romanticism. We will also question the very project of thinking about ‘poetics’ as opposed to ‘poetry’ or ‘poems’. Is it possible to theorize the art form without doing violence to the particularity - and peculiarity - of individual poems? Contemporary debates between historical, philosophical and activist poetics will be used as an entryway to our seminars and collective readings. (18th/19th, 20th/21st).
Instructor(s): John Wilkinson Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 34800

MAPH 31414. MAPH Core Course: Contemporary Analytic Philosophy. 100 Units.
This course is designed to provide MAPH students with an introduction to some recent and ongoing debates between philosophers working in the analytic tradition. The course is, however, neither a history nor an overview of analytic philosophy. Instead, we will focus on three different debates, spending about three weeks on each, with topics selected from the general areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
Instructor(s): M. Kremer Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): This course is open only to MAPH students. MAPH students who wish to apply to Ph.D. programs in philosophy are strongly urged to take this course.
Equivalent Course(s): PHIL 31414
MAPH 33000. Methods and Issues in Cinema Studies. 100 Units.
This course offers an introduction to ways of reading, writing on, and teaching film. The focus of discussion will range from methods of close analysis and basic concepts of film form, technique and style; through industrial/critical categories of genre and authorship (studios, stars, directors); through aspects of the cinema as a social institution, psycho-sexual apparatus and cultural practice; to the relationship between filmic texts and the historical horizon of production and reception. Films discussed will include works by Griffith, Lang, Hitchcock, Deren, Godard.
Instructor(s): S. Skvirsy
Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 48000, CMST 40000, ARTH 39900

MAPH 33600. History of International Cinema I: Silent Era. 100 Units.
This course provides a survey of the history of cinema from its emergence in the mid-1890s to the transition to sound in the late 1920s. We will examine the cinema as a set of aesthetic, social, technological, national, cultural, and industrial practices as they were exercised and developed during this 30-year span. Especially important for our examination will be the exchange of film techniques, practices, and cultures in an international context. We will also pursue questions related to the historiography of the cinema, and examine early attempts to theorize and account for the cinema as an artistic and social phenomenon.
Instructor(s): A. Field
Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Prior or concurrent registration in CMST 10100 required. Required of students majoring or minoring in Cinema and Media Studies.
Note(s): This is the first part of a two-quarter course.
Equivalent Course(s): CMST 28500, ARTV 20002, CMLT 32400, ENGL 48700, ENGL 29300, ARTH 28500, MAAD 18500, CMLT 22400, CMST 48500, ARTH 38500

MAPH 33700. History of International Cinema II: Sound Era to 1960. 100 Units.
The center of this course is film style, from the classical scene breakdown to the introduction of deep focus, stylistic experimentation, and technical innovation (sound, wide screen, location shooting). The development of a film culture is also discussed. Texts include Thompson and Bordwell's Film History: An Introduction; and works by Bazin, Belton, Sitney, and Godard. Screenings include films by Hitchcock, Welles, Rossellini, Bresson, Ozu, Antonioni, and Renoir.
Instructor(s): Staff
Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Prior or concurrent registration in CMST 10100 required. Required of students majoring or minoring in Cinema and Media Studies.
Note(s): CMST 28500/48500 strongly recommended
Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 29600, ARTH 28600, CMLT 32500, REES 45005, ENGL 48900, ARTV 20003, MAAD 18600, CMST 28600, CMLT 22500

MAPH 34266. Iris Murdoch. 100 Units.
In this course we'll read through philosophical work by Iris Murdoch spanning her whole career, along with several of her novels. Topics covered will include: Murdoch's criticism of the moral and practical philosophy of her time; her encounter with the work of Sartre and the existentialists; her engagement with the dialogues of Plato; her later work in moral psychology; and her discussions of aesthetics and the relation between art and philosophy. Primary philosophical readings will be taken from the collection 'Existentialists and Mystics', and her last work 'Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals'.
Instructor(s): Amos Browne
Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): This class is primarily intended for students in the MAPH program; undergraduates in their 3rd and 4th year will be admitted with instructor consent, based on the number of available places in the class.
Equivalent Course(s): PHIL 24267, PHIL 34267

MAPH 36500. Advanced Theories of Gender and Sexuality. 100 Units.
This interdisciplinary seminar-style course will focus on debates within contemporary queer and feminist theory, but the implications impact beyond concepts, with implications for building worlds. We will begin by engaging diverging genealogies of the study of sexual identity, focusing on those developed from within affect theory and theories of performativity. The second half of the quarter will focus on varieties of precarity, examined within their social and political constellations. Generally, our aim will be to engage scenes and concepts central to the interdisciplinary study of gender and sexuality; to provide familiarity with key theoretical anchors for that study; to provide skills for deriving the theoretical bases of any kind of method; to examine inconvenient cases; to question our obligations to the 'classics' of gender and sexuality theory; and to explore innovative pedagogies. In addition, aesthetic objects will be brought into contact with theoretical works, such as those by Gayle Rubin, Hortense Spillers, Gayatri Spivak, Paul B. Preciado, Mel Chen, Eve Sedgwick, Judith Butler, and Saidiya Hartman.
Instructor(s): Lauren Berlant
Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): PLSC 21410, ENGL 21401, ENGL 30201, PLSC 31410, GNSE 31400, GNSE 21400
MAPH 40130. Gender, Capital, and Desire: Jane Austen and Critical Interpretation. 100 Units.

Today, Jane Austen is one of the most famous (perhaps the most famous), most widely read, and most beloved of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British novelists. In the two hundred years since her authorial career, her novels have spawned countless imitations, homages, parodies, films, and miniseries - not to mention a thriving ‘Janeite’ fan culture. For just as long, her novels have been the objects of sustained attention by literary critics, theorists, and historians. This course will offer an in-depth examination of Austen, her literary corpus, and her cultural reception as well as a graduate-level introduction to several important schools of critical and theoretical methodology. We will read all six of Austen’s completed novels in addition to criticism spanning feminism, historicism, Marxism, queer studies, postcolonialism, and psychoanalysis. Readings may include Shoshana Felman, Frances Ferguson, William Galperin, Deidre Lynch, D.A. Miller, Edward Said, Eve Sedgwick, and Raymond Williams.

Instructor(s): Tristan Schweiger
Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 21360, GNSE 41303, GNSE 21303, ENGL 41360

MAPH 40140. Lyric Intimacies in the Renaissance. 100 Units.

This course will examine how writers in the Atlantic and Mediterranean world used lyric verse as a tool for establishing, imagining or faking intimacy-with potential lovers, employers, friends, and God. Poetry has often been perceived as a peculiarly intimate medium, tasked with providing access to a person’s inner experience: we’ll examine how Renaissance poets created the experience of lyric nearness and track the social functions the poetry of intimacy served. The course will feature British authors such as William Shakespeare, John Donne and Katherine Phillips in conversation with Petrarch’s transformational sonnets, verse in the Islamic poetic tradition by Hafez and ‘A’ishah al-Ba’uniyyah, and the work of writers in the Americas such as Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz and Anne Bradstreet. Along the way, we will explore some of the following questions: what was the gender politics of Renaissance lyric? How did writers make space for queer or heteronormative writing and attachment within the conventions of the love poem? What looks familiar about the forms of intimacy we find in these texts? What remains profoundly strange about them?

Instructor(s): Sarah Kunjummen
Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 44440, ENGL 40140, GNSE 24440, ENGL 22140

MAPH 41300. Our biopolitics, ourselves: feminist science fiction. 100 Units.

1970s feminist theory made a significant conceptual move in provisionally bracketing off biological sex from the historical/cultural work of gender. Feminist science fiction (in contrast), in its brief flourishing in the 70s and early 80s, finds its utopian moments in the biological, in genetic manipulation, reproductive technology, ecological forms of being and new bodies of a variety of kinds. This class will read science fiction, feminist theory and current critical work that concerns itself with biopolitics in order to ask questions about the divide between nature and culture, what’s entailed in imagining the future, what gender and genre might have to do with each other, and just what science fiction is and does anyway. Authors include: Le Guin, Russ, Butler, Piercy, Haraway, Rubin, Firestone.

Instructor(s): Hilary Strang
Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 21310, GNSE 21310, ENGL 41310, GNSE 41300

MAPH 41400. Futures Other Than Ours: Science Fiction and Utopia. 100 Units.

Science fiction is often mistaken for a variety of futurism, extrapolating what lies ahead. This class will consider what kind of relationship science fiction might have to the future other than prediction, anticipation, optimism or pessimism. How might science fiction enable thinking or imagining futures in modes other than those available to liberalism (progress, reproduction, generation) or neoliberalism (speculation, anticipation, investment)? This class asks how science fiction constitutes its horizons, where and how difference emerges in utopias, and what it might be to live in a future that isn’t ours. Readings may include SF works by Delany, Le Guin, Russ, Butler, Robinson, Banks, Ryman, Jones; theoretical and critical readings by Bloch, Jameson, Suvin, Munoz, Murphy, and others.

Instructor(s): Hilary Strang
Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): Email the instructor directly for consent.
Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 41420, ENGL 21420

MAPH 42002. Human Rights: Philosophical Foundations. 100 Units.

Human rights are claims of justice that hold merely in virtue of our shared humanity. In this course we will explore philosophical theories of this elementary and crucial form of justice. Among topics to be considered are the role that dignity and humanity play in grounding such rights, their relation to political and economic institutions, and the distinction between duties of justice and claims of charity or humanitarian aid. Finally we will consider the application of such theories to concrete, problematic and pressing problems, such as global poverty, torture and genocide. (A) (I)

Instructor(s): B. Laurence
Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): LLSO 21002, HIST 39319, HMRT 21002, INRE 31602, HIST 29319, PHIL 21002, PHIL 31002, HMRT 31002