Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences

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Senior Lecturers
• Morrie Fred, Anthropology
• Victor Lima, Economics

Lecturers
• Darcy Heuring, History
• Melissa Tartari, Economics

Earl S. Johnson Instructors
• Samantha Fan, Psychology
• Muh-Chung Lin, Sociology
• Francis Mckay, Anthropology

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

Director of Career Services
• Shelly Robinson
Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences

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: https://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 31108. Temple or Forum: Designing the Obama Presidential Center. 100 Units.
Throughout this seminar participants will research and discuss key issues pertaining to the development and implications of presidential libraries and museums. These insights will become the foundation for a final project in which they will work in small teams to design a potential exhibit for the Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park.
Instructor(s): Morris Fred Terms Offered: Spring,TBD
Prerequisite(s): Undergrads must be upper division (3rd and 4th years).
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 31108,ANTH 24520
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, Straussian, 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.
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 seminar explores the dynamics of Israeli culture and society through a combination of weekly screenings of Israeli fiction and documentary films with readings from ethnographic and other relevant research. Among the (often overlapping) topics to be covered in this examination of the institutional and ideological construction of Israeli identity/ies: the absorption of immigrants; ethnic, class, and religious tensions; the kibbutz; military experience; the Holocaust; evolving attitudes about gender and sexuality; the struggle for minorities’ rights; and Arab-Jewish relations.
Instructor(s): Francis McKay
Terms Offered: Spring, TBD
Prerequisite(s): Upper level undergraduates admitted with consent.
Equivalent Course(s): CHSS 32800, HIPS 22800, ANTH 24355, ANTH 35135

MAPS 33501. Gender, Sex and Empire. 100 Units.
This course examines the complex and contested relationships between gender, sexuality, social organization and power in histories of (primarily British) imperialism and colonialism from the early conquests in the New World through the twentieth century. Employing insights from gender history, postcolonial studies and feminist theory, we look at a broad range of historical case studies to explore themes such as the intersectionality of race, class and gender; the instability of gender ideologies; how power was articulated through the fields of gender and sexuality; the politics of intimacy; and the regulation and ‘improvement’ of colonial bodies. Our goal is to better understand the ways that gender/sexuality and Western imperialism were co-constitutive in specific imperial and colonial contexts.
Instructor(s): Darcy Heuring
Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): Consent required for all undergrads.
Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 33501, GNSE 25706, HIST 23308

MAPS 34500. Anthropology of Museums I. 100 Units.
Using anthropological theories and methodology as a conceptual framework, this seminar will explore the organizational and ideological aspects of museum culture(s). The course includes visits to museums with guest museum professionals as guides into the culture of museums.
Instructor(s): M. Fred
Terms Offered: Autumn, Winter
Prerequisite(s): Advanced standing and consent of instructor
Note(s): CHDV Distribution: C
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 34502, CRES 34501, SOSC 34500, CHDV 34501, ANTH 24511

MAPS 34600. Anthropology of Museums I. 100 Units.
Instructor(s): M. Fred
Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Advanced standing and consent of instructor
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. MacAloon Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): Open only to graduate students and 3rd and 4th year undergraduates.
Equivalent Course(s): FNDL 29605

MAPS 40164. Involved Interviewing: Strategies for Interviewing Hard to Penetrate Communities and Populations. 100 Units.
Imagine that you must interview someone who hails from a background unlike your own; perhaps you need to interview an incarcerated youth, or gather a life history from an ill person. Maybe your task is to conduct fieldwork inside a community that challenges your comfort level. How do we get others to talk to us? How do we get out of our own way and limited training to become fully and comfortably engaged in people and the communities in which they reside? This in-depth investigation into interviewing begins with an assumption that the researcher as interviewer is an integral part of the research process. We turn a critical eye on the interviewer’s role in getting others to talk and learn strategies that encourage fertile interviews regardless of the situational context. Weekly reading assignments facilitate students’ exploration of what the interview literature can teach us about involved interviewing. Additionally, we critically assess our role as interviewer and what that requires from us. Students participate in evaluating interview scenarios that are designed to explore our assumptions, sharpen our interviewing skills and troubleshoot sticky situations. We investigate a diversity of settings and populations as training ground for leading effective interviews. The final project includes: 1) a plan that demonstrates knowledge of how to design an effective interviewing strategy for unique field settings; 2) instructor’s feedback on students’ personal journals on the interviews.
Instructor(s): S. Hicks-Bartlett Terms Offered: Autumn,Winter
Prerequisite(s): Open to Advanced Undergraduates. Advanced Undergraduates MUST obtain permission from the instructor to enroll.
Equivalent Course(s): SOCI 40164

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 MacAloon 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 46701. American Legal Culture. 100 Units.
This seminar examines how the values and norms of American Legal Culture are constructed through both the experiences of the general public and socialization of key actors in institutions such as law schools/firms, popular media, courts, police, and jails/prisons. Sessions combine discussion of relevant literature with presentations by Chicago-area experts from these various institutions. Seminar participants conduct fieldwork in related sites in the Chicago area, presenting the results of their research projects in the final session(s) of the course.
Instructor(s): M. Fred Terms Offered: TBD
Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing for undergraduates
Equivalent Course(s): LAWS 93801, LLSO 26203, SOSC 30416, ANTH 30415

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 MacAloon Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): 3rd and 4th year undergraduates only
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 20420, ANTH 30420, SOSC 25090
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.