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Requirements for Majors

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General Requirements

The B.A. in art history is intended to furnish students with a broad knowledge of Western and non-Western art, including architecture; and it also provides an opportunity for the complementary, intensive study of an area of special interest. It is recommended for students who wish to develop their abilities of visual analysis and criticism; to acquire some sense of the major developments in the arts from ancient times to the present; and to understand the visual arts as aspects of social, cultural, and intellectual history. So conceived, the study of art is an element of a general, liberal arts education; the skills of analytical thinking, logical argument, and clear verbal expression necessary to the program are basic to most fields. The program in art history prepares interested students for advanced study at the graduate level and, eventually, for work in academic, museum, and gallery settings.

General Requirements for Art History Majors

*(1) Students register for an approved drama, music, or DOVA course to meet the general education requirement in the dramatic, musical, and visual arts; art history majors may not use art history courses to meet general education requirements.

(2) Students register for a total of four Survey Courses (see definition under Courses for Nonmajors above): one course at the 14000 level, one course at the 15000 level, one course at the 16000 level, and a fourth Survey Course of the student's choosing.

(3) Art history majors take the department's two undergraduate seminars. In Winter Quarter of their third year, they register for the Junior Seminar (ARTH 29600). Students who wish to study abroad during that quarter meet with the Undergraduate Program Chair to work out an alternative program of study no later than the beginning of their third year. In Autumn Quarter of their fourth year, they register for the B.A. paper writing seminar (ARTH 29800) (see following section).

(4) Students in art history write at least two research papers that are ten to fifteen pages in length before starting their fourth year, typically in the context of 20000-level courses in art history. Alternatives include 40000-level graduate seminars, reading courses, or, more rarely, art-in-context courses. It is the student's responsibility to initiate arrangements with an instructor and obtain his or her signature on an approval form when the paper is completed. Approval forms are available on the [Forms page of our website \(/undergraduate/forms\)](#).

A research paper should address a topic chosen by the student in consultation with the instructor. The student should include an analysis of his or her research of existing scholarship and other relevant source materials. The paper should also draw on that scholarship and evidence to shape and support a thesis or argument of the student's own devising. Formal analyses of works of art and analytic papers on materials assembled for a class by the instructor do not qualify. However, students may ask the instructor to allow a substitution of a research paper or they may write a research paper in addition to basic course requirements.

(5) Students develop a special field of interest (see below).

(6) Within this field, students write a senior paper (see below).

(7) **Double Majors and the BA Thesis:** Whether or not a single BA thesis can satisfy the requirements for a double major in Art History and another program is decided by the department on a case by case basis. The criteria on which the decision is based include:

- the degree to which the resulting thesis is likely to speak from and to art history, even as it necessarily speaks from and to another field
- the feasibility of the proposed advising arrangements for the proposed joint thesis
- the department's estimation of the student's track record for independent work that bodes well for writing a successful thesis while navigating between two majors.

A student who wishes to write a single BA thesis for a double major in Art History and another program must write a letter (a page) explaining his or her request for the department's approval. The letter should be addressed to the Undergraduate Program Chair.

(8) Students may apply to transfer up to four courses in art history to fulfill their major requirements. Preference will be given to courses that fall into the survey course category or, in the case of students in Track II, into the category of special field courses taken in disciplines/departments outside art history. Approval is required from the Director of Undergraduate Studies, who will review each course individually. Students requesting major credit for courses taken at another institution, including those affiliated with the University, if not taught by University of Chicago faculty, or in a study abroad program, should take note that credit for such courses in the college does not automatically constitute credit for them in the major. In the case of study abroad programs, and in any other case in which this is possible, students should meet with the Director of Undergraduate Studies beforehand to discuss the courses they wish to take. After completing the course, students should petition the Director of Undergraduate Studies in writing for credit for the major. The petition must include a cover letter with the title, the course description, and the name and location of the institution. To this should be attached a syllabus and a written record of the work the student did for the course. NOTE: The Office of the Dean of Students in the College must approve the transfer of all courses taken at institutions other than those in which students are enrolled as part of University of Chicago sponsored study programs abroad. More information is available here.

Summary of Requirements

General Education

introductory drama, music, or COVA course

Track I

4 Survey Courses: one in each of the 14000s, 15000s, and 16000s series; and one of the student's choice
 3 upper-level ARTH courses in special field
 3 upper-level ARTH courses (one course each in Western art before 1400, Western art after 1400, and non-Western art)
 1 ARTH 29600 (Junior Seminar)
 1 ARTH 29800 (Senior Seminar)
 senior paper

 Total: 12

Track II

4 Survey Courses: one in each of the 14000s, 15000s, and 16000s series; and one of the student's choice
 5 upper-level courses in special field (three departmental and two extra-departmental)
 1 upper-level ARTH elective (not special field)
 1 ARTH 29600 (Junior Seminar)
 1 ARTH 29800 (Senior Seminar)
 senior paper

 Total: 12

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Recommendations for Majors

(1) Students are encouraged to take graduate seminars after first obtaining the permission of the instructor. (These seminars are also open to nonmajors with the same proviso.)

(2) Students are urged to also pursue upper-level language courses. If a language course is relevant to a student's special field, the student may petition the Undergraduate Program Chair to count it toward electives.

(3) Those planning to continue their study of art history at the graduate level are advised to achieve language competency equal to at least two years of college study in French or German, or in Italian for those with primary interest in the art of Italy.

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Two Tracks

In structuring their programs, students may choose one of two orientations ("tracks"): one offering a broad coverage of the history of art, and the other offering a close cross-disciplinary study of a specific area or topic.

Track I In addition to the four Survey Courses, the Junior Seminar (ARTH 29600), and the B.A. paper writing seminar (Senior Seminar ARTH 29800), Track I students take six upper-level courses within the department. Occasionally, Art in Context Courses (see definition under Courses for Nonmajors above) may be substituted for upper-level courses with prior approval of the Undergraduate Program Chair. Within the six departmental courses, students must develop a special field consisting of three courses with a relevance to one another that is clearly established. The field may be defined by chronological period, medium, national culture, genre, methodological concerns, or a suitable combination. Because they reflect the interests of individual students, such fields range widely in topic, approach, and scope. Reading courses with art history faculty may be used to pursue specific questions within a field. Students are encouraged to distribute the remaining three departmental courses widely throughout Western and non-Western art; and students are required to take at least one course in Western art before 1400, one course in Western art after 1400, and one course in non-Western art.

Track II In addition to the four Survey Courses, the Junior Seminar, and the B.A. Seminar, Track II students take six courses: three upper-level courses inside and two courses outside the art history department that make up the special field, plus one additional upper-level course in art history, the subject of which is the student's choice. In order to encourage breadth of expertise, the elective course may not be in the student's special field. Occasionally, Art in Context Courses (see definition under Courses for Nonmajors above) may be substituted for upper-level courses with prior approval of the Undergraduate Program Chair.

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The Special Field

In Track II, the special field may take many different forms. It may be civilization defined by chronological period, nation-state, cultural institution, or a suitable combination. Extradepartmental courses in history and literature are particularly relevant to such a program. Another special field might be conceptual in character (e.g., art and the history of science, urban history, geography) and draw upon a variety of extradepartmental courses in the Humanities Collegiate Division and the Social Sciences Collegiate Division. A field could combine historical, critical, and theoretical perspectives (e.g., visual arts in the twentieth century) and include courses in art history, drama, music, film, and popular culture. A field could explore the built environment and draw on extradepartmental courses in history, geographical studies, or other departments. Finally, art history and studio courses (e.g., COVA) may be combined in special fields exploring their interrelations (e.g., abstraction and conceptualism in modern art). The topic for the senior paper normally develops from the special field and allows for further study of the area through independent research and writing.

Whether a student is following Track I or Track II, the proposal for the special field, in the form of a written petition, must be received by the Undergraduate Program Chair and approved by a faculty committee no later than the end of a student's third year. Students should consult the art history Web site and the Undergraduate Program Chair for guidelines on the department's organization and preparation of the proposal. It is strongly recommended that students complete at least two courses in their special field by the end of their third year.

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Undergraduate Seminars and the Senior Paper

The **Junior Seminar (ARTH 29600)** is designed to introduce the methods of art historical research. It also requires students to develop a senior paper topic and identify potential faculty advisers. Students who wish to study abroad during Winter Quarter of their third year must meet with the Undergraduate Program Chair no later than the beginning of their third year to work out an alternative program of study. By the end of their third year, it is the student's responsibility to find a member of the faculty who agrees to act as the faculty research adviser for the senior paper. The research paper or project used to meet this requirement may not be used to meet the B.A. paper requirement in another major.

The **Senior Seminar (ARTH 29800)** is a workshop course designed to assist students in writing and researching their senior papers. Students typically take the seminar in Autumn Quarter before graduating in Spring Quarter; students graduating in Autumn or Winter Quarter should take the course in the previous academic year. In the closing sessions of the seminar, students present their work-in-progress for the senior paper. They continue their research on the paper during the following quarters, meeting at intervals with their faculty research adviser. Students may elect to take Preparation for the Senior Paper (ARTH 29900) in Autumn or Winter Quarter to afford additional time for research or writing. A polished draft of the paper is due by Friday of ninth week of the quarter preceding graduation; the final version is due Monday of second week of the quarter of graduation. Both are to be submitted in duplicate: one copy to the research adviser and the second to the Undergraduate Program Chair.

Because individual projects vary, no specific requirements for the senior paper have been set. Essays range in length from twenty to forty pages, but there is no minimum or maximum.

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[The University of Chicago \(http://www.uchicago.edu/\)](http://www.uchicago.edu/)

ART HISTORY MAJOR WORKSHEET

NAME:	DATE:
	QUARTER AND YEAR OF GRADUATION:
TELEPHONE:	E-MAIL:
Surveys and Required Seminars. Enter course number, title, quarter, and year. Junior and Senior Seminars are required and occur once a year. Art history majors may not use art history courses to meet general education requirements.	
PREMODERN SURVEY (140-LEVEL):	MODERN SURVEY (150-LEVEL):
NON-WESTERN SURVEY (160-LEVEL):	ADDITIONAL SURVEY:
JUNIOR SEMINAR (ARTH 29600), WINTER QUARTER:	SENIOR SEMINAR (ARTH 29800), AUTUMN QUARTER:
Special Field. Majors concentrate in a special field through three interrelated upper-level courses. The field may be defined by chronological period, medium, national culture, genre, theme, or methodological concerns.	
SPECIAL FIELD:	ART HISTORY COURSE IN SPECIAL FIELD:
DATE APPROVED:	
ART HISTORY COURSE IN SPECIAL FIELD:	ART HISTORY COURSE IN SPECIAL FIELD:
Upper-level Courses (Track I/Track II). Majors elect either Track I, which offers broad coverage of the history of art, or Track II, which offers a close cross-disciplinary study of the special field.	
Track I	Track II
WESTERN ART PRE-1400:	NON-ART HISTORY COURSE IN SPECIAL FIELD:
WESTERN ART POST-1400:	NON-ART HISTORY COURSE IN SPECIAL FIELD:
NON-WESTERN ART:	ART HISTORY ELECTIVE (OUTSIDE SPECIAL FIELD):
Research Papers. Two 10–15 page papers drawing on art historical scholarship and research to support original theses. Usually written in the context of 200-level courses, 400-level graduate seminars, reading courses, or art-in-context courses.	
PAPER 1 TITLE:	
PAPER 2 TITLE:	
B.A. Paper. Typically 20–40 pages, advancing an original argument or claim and demonstrating knowledge of the field.	
B.A. PAPER TOPIC:	
FACULTY ADVISOR:	DATE APPROVED:
Notes.	

DUS SIGNATURE

STUDENT SIGNATURE

Art History Special Field Declaration
Department of Art History, University of Chicago

Name and Year:

Brief title:

Description/Rationale: (one paragraph is fine; no more than 200 words)

Courses to count for special field: (list and indicate quarter and year; include classes you plan to count as part of your special field whether or not you have already taken them)

Research Papers by Art History Majors and Minors Approval form

Guidelines for research papers:

Two research papers in art history are required of majors and one of minors. They are to be completed by the end of the student's third year, should be 10-15 pages long, and are normally written in the context of 20000-level courses or other upper-level courses (including 17000 and 18000 courses) by special arrangement with the instructor. Research papers should be written on a topic of the student's own devising, using materials found through research (i.e., the paper should not be based on readings directly assigned in the context of the course).

Art History Majors:

When you turn in your research paper to your instructor, please fill out and attach this form and ask the instructor to approve your paper for the requirement by signing, dating, and returning it to the current Undergraduate Program Advisor's mailbox in the Art History department office. If the form is mailed, it can be sent to Undergraduate Program Advisor, Department of Art History, Cochrane-Woods Art Center, 5540 S. Greenwood Ave., Chicago, IL 60637.

Student's name:
Title of paper:
Course number and title:
Instructor:
Quarter:

Instructor:

Please sign, date, and return to the above addresses.

I approve this paper as satisfactory fulfillment of the guidelines for research papers as stated above.

Comments (optional):

Signature:

Date: