Welcome to the Fundamentals Major!

You have joined an ambitious and talented cohort of students and faculty who are together invested in the careful and thoughtful consideration of several of history’s greatest texts. This is a major dedicated study that is deeper than it is broad and that perhaps values wisdom more than academic convention. Students help to shape their own courses of study in conversation with a Fundamentals Faculty Adviser. There are many resources to help you, and we encourage you to refer to all of these individuals frequently.

- Faculty Adviser: assigned to each student
- Chair of Fundamentals: Malynne Sternstein
- Program Coordinator: Alexandra Greenwald
- College Adviser: assigned to each student

For more information, you may also refer to the Fundamentals website: http://fundamentals.uchicago.edu. Look here for an up-to-date course schedule and downloadable forms you may need throughout the year.

To help you manage your time and anticipate your next steps, we have put together this calendar of major events in your Fundamentals life. You should look it over in its entirety now, and refer to it again each quarter. With regard to the particular graduation requirements for Fundamentals, please consult the College Course Catalogue.

As you select your courses, please work to engage with a wide variety of texts. The questions our students pose are broad and far-reaching; as such, they are expected to engage with texts that represent significant intellectual breadth. Students are strongly encouraged to select coursework and texts that represent a variety of intellectual and artistic movements, languages, geographic regions, and historical periods. Students should consult with their Fundamentals advisor and/or the Program Coordinator to ensure their selections meet this expectation.

We want particularly to encourage you to cultivate your relationship with your Faculty Adviser. The individuals in the department are excited to work with you. Their schedules can be very busy. You should expect to take responsibility for this relationship yourself. Ask for meetings when you need or want them; if you are having difficulty securing the meetings you need, let the Coordinator know.

Program Outline

A. Second Year

1. Autumn Quarter
   Enroll in the Gateway Course.

   If you do not already have fluency in a foreign language, begin/continue work in a foreign language. Remember that you will need to attain proficiency in a language at the 203 level and that you will be required to read at least one of your Fundamentals texts—either wholly or in significant part—in the language you choose. If you are having trouble picking a foreign language, you should speak to your Faculty Adviser and to the Program Coordinator.
Early in the quarter, there will be a reception for Fundamentals students and faculty. Look for the email announcement and please plan to attend. It will be a good opportunity to connect with advanced students and with faculty you’ve not yet met.

Be sure to contact the Fundamentals Coordinator sometime during the quarter.

When you were admitted to the program you were assigned a Fundamentals Adviser. Though we hope you had a chance to meet them after you joined the program last spring, it is quite possible that you have not yet met your adviser. Before Week 7, make an appointment to meet with your adviser (even if the two of you have already met). Be prepared to discuss your Fundamentals question and the kinds of texts you think might help you approach your question. How has your thinking changed since you applied to the program last spring? This is an introductory meeting. Try to become familiar with your adviser’s research interests. Consider telling your adviser about other things you do, on or off campus, and other interests you find animating. Explain how your Fundamentals question relates to other interests and passions in your life. Discuss with your adviser the kind of relationship you would like to have with each other. How does your adviser understand his or her role? How would the adviser like to be contacted? How often will the two of you plan to be in touch? Note that you do not always have to have a specific question when you arrange to see your adviser. Sometimes it is nice just to check in, share what you are working on in your Fundamentals coursework, and discuss your developing interests.

2. **Winter Quarter**

Enroll in a text course—usually a FNDL originating or cross-listed course, but you may occasionally find a suitable course outside the major that has not been cross-listed. If you have questions, contact the Program Coordinator.

3. **Spring Quarter**

Enroll in a text course this quarter. Keep in mind that you will have to write a Junior Paper next year, almost always focusing on a single text. You can only write about a text you have studied with a faculty member (which could include any texts covered in the Introductory Sequence). If you would like to write about anything in particular, you should take a course in the appropriate text this quarter or next Autumn.

Attend the Power of Books lecture, during first or second week.

After Week 6 this quarter, meet with your faculty adviser to discuss your plans for the Junior Paper. You should begin to browse course listings, bookstores, and other resources to find ideas of the text you want to write about in your Junior Paper. Summer can be a time of exploration; you and your Faculty Adviser should discuss the range of texts you might look at.

All second-year students are also required to meet with their College Adviser before Week 8 of this quarter; get in touch with him and set up a meeting.

Attend our end-of-year reception.

**B. Third Year**

1. **Autumn Quarter**

You should plan to have taken at least four of your required text courses, two of your supporting courses, and your Junior Paper Writing course by the end of this year. Plan your academic schedule accordingly. These are not rigid requirements, but general benchmarks. Keep in mind that some text courses might be satisfied with Independent Study courses. If you are interested in Independent Study Courses, you should speak with your Faculty Adviser and the Program Coordinator. It is a good idea to arrange these well
ahead of time. If you have not yet finished your language training, you should continue foreign language study.

Come to our Autumn reception!

In Week 2 or Week 3, returning Fundamentals students each have a Review Conference. This is an occasion for you to consider again your Fundamentals question and the way it is has changed over the preceding year. It is also an opportunity for the faculty to check on your progress in the major, raise any concerns, recommend avenues of exploration, and think with you about your question. You should not be nervous about this meeting, but you should prepare for it.

Before your Review Conference, you should:

- Complete the worksheet provided by the Fundamentals Program Coordinator. This will include some consideration of the text courses you intend to take over the course of the year.
- If time allows, meet with your faculty adviser to discuss your Fundamentals question and the insights you may have gleaned from the preceding year’s coursework. Discuss also your plans for the Junior Paper.
- Rewrite your Fundamentals question statement.

In Week 4, 5 or 6, there will be an informational meeting about writing the Junior Paper. Please try to attend. At this meeting or before, you will receive a clear set of deadlines for the Junior Paper. Before the end of this quarter, you will be asked to have your JP proposal approved by your Junior Paper Adviser. Therefore, you should determine the text for your Junior Paper and speak with the faculty member with whom you would like to work early this quarter.

If you wish to petition to write your Junior Paper in the Spring Quarter, it is wise to do so shortly following the meeting. Be prepared that some petitions are not granted. Have a backup plan.

**A NOTE ABOUT THE JUNIOR PAPER:** The Junior Paper is an exercise in close reading and is usually 22-25 pages long. It is a focused consideration of how a single text speaks to something related to your Fundamentals question. Sometimes a student will elect to write a comparative paper using two texts. Permission to write on more than one text is determined by the student’s adviser and the Fundamentals Chair. As a program, we take this assignment quite seriously as your opportunity for rigorous and leisurely consideration of a text. Naturally, it helps if you are excited about the text you write about. Often it is an occasion for students to exercise their language skills or to write a paper relevant to possible graduate school interests. However, we understand this paper to be a writing exercise, the best example of the kind of work we hope you are doing in every Fundamentals course. Do not feel particular pressure to identify your favorite book; we do not require that this paper represent all of your passions and interests.

You are expected to work with a member of the Fundamentals faculty on the Junior Paper. A natural choice would be your faculty adviser, but this is not necessary if another member of the faculty taught the text on which you plan to write.

Students should plan to write their papers in the Winter quarter. Students may petition the Fundamentals Chair in writing for permission to write in the Spring quarter if they will be traveling abroad on a University Program in the Autumn or Winter or if the faculty member with whom they plan to work will not be in residence during the Winter.

All students in residence during the Winter, even those who have been granted permission to write in the Spring, will be expected to participate in the Junior Paper Writing Colloquium. The
Colloquium meets every other week to workshop various aspects of your paper, develop your ideas, and provide a structure for meeting deadlines. Details regarding the Colloquium schedule will be made available before Winter registration the preceding quarter.

2. Winter Quarter
Enroll in the Junior Paper Independent Study (FNDL 29901). To do this, you should collect the requisite form from your College Adviser and have it signed by either the Fundamentals Chair or the Program Coordinator before Friday of Week 3. Participation in the Junior Paper Colloquium is a mandatory part of writing the Junior Paper.

Stay on top of deadlines this quarter! Ten weeks pass quickly.

All third-year students are also required to meet with their College Adviser before Week 8. Get in touch early to set up a meeting.

3. Spring Quarter
If you didn’t write your Junior Paper last quarter, it needs to be done this quarter. Enroll in FNDL 29901 and follow the schedule provided by the Program Coordinator. This option is only available to students who successfully petitioned in Autumn Quarter.

Attend the Power of Books lecture.

After Week 6, meet with your adviser to discuss your preparation for the Senior Exam. You won’t take the exam until Spring Quarter of your fourth year, but you should look ahead in the schedule and determine how you will satisfy your course requirements. This is also a good time to reflect on your Fundamentals major. What new questions have been opened to you? What would you like to accomplish in your major before the end of next year?

Attend the end-of-year reception. Two years done!

C. Fourth Year

1. Autumn Quarter
All fourth-year students are required to meet with their College Adviser before Week 8. It’s important to touch base – this year, you need to finish taking text and supporting courses and demonstrate language proficiency. Discuss your schedule with your adviser or with the Fundamentals Program Coordinator if you have questions about any extant requirements.

Attend the Autumn reception.

In Week 3 or 4, returning Fundamentals students each have a Review Conference. This is nearly identical to your previous conference, so you should know what to expect. You’ll prepare in the same manner:

• Meet with your Faculty Adviser to discuss again your Fundamentals question and the insights you may have gleaned from the preceding year’s coursework. Discuss your remaining coursework and how you think about your Fundamentals question in relation to all of the texts you have studied.

• Complete the worksheet provided by the Fundamentals Program Coordinator.

• Rewrite your Fundamentals Question Statement.
2. **Winter Quarter**

Toward the end of the quarter, there will be a meeting about how to prepare for the Senior Exam. Please attend. At this meeting or shortly afterward, you will be asked to provide a list of the **six texts** you would like to study for your exam. In your list, indicate with whom you studied the text, the course name, and the quarter taken. Remember that your foreign language text must be among the six, and that you may include any of the texts studied in your introductory sequence. Very rarely, you may be asked to reconsider your list. This is most likely to happen if we don’t think we could identify two readers with sufficient familiarity with one of your chosen texts. Naturally, we do our best to support any course that was offered with a FNDL course number.

You will be asked to revise your Fundamentals Question Statement one more time in preparation for the exam. This last draft of your Statement should reference your six texts and the way each informs your thinking about your question. This Statement will be shared with faculty members who are asked to compose your exam questions. Expect to submit this document to the Program Coordinator before the end of Week 1 of Spring quarter.

This is a good time to make sure that the office has a record of your completion of the foreign language requirement.

**A NOTE ABOUT THE SENIOR EXAM:** This exam marks the culmination of your work in Fundamentals. It is your opportunity to consider your Fundamentals questions with reference to each of the texts you have studied. Inasmuch as the texts you have studied truly are great books, there will be much still to explore in them. However, your exam should demonstrate some facility, even mastery. By enrolling in an Independent Study, you will carve out significant time to prepare for your exam. You should guard this time, attend carefully to the materials, and consider working with your peers in preparation.

3. **Spring Quarter**

Enroll in the Senior Exam Independent Study (FNDL 29902). To do this, you should collect the requisite form from your College Adviser and have it signed by either the Program Chair or the Program Coordinator before the end of Week 3.

Week 1 of this quarter is the last time that you will be asked to submit a revision of your Fundamentals Question Statement. This is the version that will be shown to your examiners.

Attend the Power of Books lecture.

Friday of **Week 6**, pick up your exam after 9:00 a.m. You will have until mid-afternoon on Monday of Week 7 to answer two questions. Each answer is usually 8–10 pages long. You may, of course, refer to any texts and notes in your writing. Contact the Program Coordinator with any questions.

Sometime after you have finished your exam, meet one last time with your Faculty Adviser to discuss the program and your experience. Exams will be evaluated before the end of Week 9. After your readers have been identified, you are encouraged to speak with them about your performance.

Come and celebrate at our end-of-year reception!

**Congratulations!**

**Go and do great things, and don’t stop reading.**
III. Fundamentals Check List

An easy way to keep on track with what you need to do for any particular quarter is to go to [http://fundamentals.uchicago.edu/page/timelines](http://fundamentals.uchicago.edu/page/timelines), which has the general yearly outline for the program (listed below) as well as a more in-depth timeline for the Junior Paper and the Senior Exam. Please plan ahead! Things like study abroad, work commitments, or other conflicts of course come up, but keep this schedule in mind (and on your calendar) as you make your plans to keep complications to a minimum.

A. Autumn Quarter
   - Week 1–2: Welcome-back reception
   - Weeks 2–3: Review Conferences for students in their 3rd/4th year
   - Week 6: Junior Paper orientation
   - Before Week 8: 4th-years must meet with College Adviser

B. Winter Quarter
   - Week 7: Senior Exam orientation
   - Before Week 8: 3rd-years must meet with College Adviser

C. Spring Quarter
   - Week 2: Junior Papers due
   - Week 2: Power of Books colloquium
   - Week 5: Fundamentals applications due
   - Week 6–7: Senior exams administered over the weekend
   - Week 7: Results of admissions announced
   - Before Week 8: 2nd-years must meet with College Adviser
   - Week 10: End-of-year reception
IV. Frequently Asked Questions

A. Do all courses with the FNDL designation count as text/author courses?
Most courses offered with the FNDL designation count as text/author courses, but there are just a few exceptions each year. The exceptions, usually taught by members of the Fundamentals faculty, should be fairly obvious in their failure to address just one or two authors or texts. An example is FNDL 23312: Memory, Commemoration, and Mourning, taught by Bertram Cohler and Peter Homans. Courses like this are often included because they are likely to work for many students as supporting courses and because the faculty are familiar with the Fundamentals program. If you have any questions about whether a specific course will count as a text/author course, consult the Program Coordinator.

B. Help me understand supporting courses.
You are required to take four supporting courses to satisfy the major requirements. Those courses that satisfy the requirement are determined primarily by the question and texts you choose to study. They may be taken in any department in the University, but you should be prepared to explain their relevance to your particular course of study. Your College Adviser will require that you identify your supporting courses for them at regular meetings. You are also asked to list your progress in the major, including your supporting courses, in preparation for Review Conferences in the Fall Quarters of your Junior and Senior years. You may be asked to explain your choices at those conferences.

C. How and when should I sign up for an Independent Reading Course?
There is no requirement ever to take an Independent Reading Course. In some instances, however, reading courses can be exciting elements in your work in Fundamentals. They are opportunities for a single student or a small group of students to study with a faculty member a text that is not offered in the course catalog. If there is a particular text that seems important to your Fundamentals question or one that you are particularly excited to read as part of your program, it might make sense to arrange a reading course. You should discuss your interest with your faculty adviser and with the Fundamentals Program Coordinator. They can help you determine whether a reading course is a good idea and brainstorm faculty members who might be interested and willing to do the course with you.

When you decide that you would like to arrange a reading course:

- It might make sense to determine whether you know anyone else who might like to participate. Often it can be more compelling to a professor if there are multiple students interested to read a text together, and the support of peers can be helpful in a course that is less structured than most of your courses.

- Find a faculty member who is willing to direct the course. Have a meeting with that professor and determine pragmatic details: What exactly will you read? How often will you meet? What will be the requirements to receive credit? Some professors will recommend that you put these expectations in writing; even if your professor doesn’t ask for this, you should consider writing it out and confirming your expectations.

- When you are comfortable with the details, visit your College Adviser to collect an Independent Reading and Research Form.

- Sign up for FNDL 29900. Note: you will receive a letter grade for this course.
• You will need the signatures of the professor teaching the course and of the Fundamentals Chair. The Program Coordinator can usually sign in lieu of the Chair.

• Submit this document to the registrar before the end of the third week of the quarter.

There are two required courses for which you will have to go through this process. When you write the Junior Paper, you will register for FNDL 29901; the quarter you take your Senior Exam, you will register for FNDL 29902. In both these cases, you should list the faculty supervisor of the course as Malynne Sternstein (section 20). You will, of course, continue to work with your particular faculty advisers for these projects, but your passing grade will be assigned by the department.

D. I’m confused about the language requirement. How do I fulfill it?
Close reading requires careful attention to language. Students are required to study at least one text composed originally in a language other than English and to demonstrate competency in that language. First, a student must complete coursework or test out of the 203 level of a language offered at the University. Second, a student must use the language to read carefully one of the texts that will appear on the Senior Exam list and write a paper about that text.

The Fundamentals language requirement is designed with the belief that the texts you study in the program should come from diverse cultures and be appreciated in their original language. In many cases, two years of formal language study will provide enough proficiency to analyze a non-Anglophone text in part or whole. However, this is not true of all languages, or all language learners. In cases where the target language requires more study to reach fluency, a student can prove their proficiency through alternative routes.

For example, a student can take a course in which the text will be studied in English translation, but agree with the instructor to read the text, in whole or in part, in its original language. In these cases, the instructor must be proficient in that language and be able to certify (in a short email to the Fundamentals Coordinator and Chair) that the student has engaged deeply with the text in its original language. The student could also study the text in its original language in an Independent Study course. In rare cases, the student could study the text on their own and be given a sight-reading exam. The last two options are left to the discretion of the instructor, who need not be a Fundamentals core faculty member. In both cases, the instructor communicates with the Program Coordinator about proficiency.

All students should be prepared to be examined on their non-Anglophone text in their Senior Exam and must demonstrate proficiency therein by citing passages from the original-language text.

E. Can I double major?
It is certainly possible to double major with Fundamentals and not uncommon. Naturally, we want to encourage you to focus your attention on your work in Fundamentals and will often discourage students from double majoring. It might be difficult to study for your Senior Exam while also writing a BA Thesis in another department. Sometimes meeting the requirements of multiple departments can unduly constrain your scheduling options and set up a kind of adversarial relationship between your majors. Most research suggests that you gain very little advantage—if any—in the job market or graduate school applications to list a double major on your transcript. Of course, sometimes double-majoring enables you to explore two very complementary courses of study or allows you to pursue different interests.

There is sometimes a secondary question about when coursework can apply to more than one major. In the case of a minor, courses may not apply to both a student’s major and to a minor. In the case of majors,
however, the college’s current policy is only that a department may determine which courses apply towards its own requirements. A department cannot exclude another department from accepting the same course to satisfy other requirements.

Then there is a question about whether one can write the same paper as a Junior Paper and as a BA Thesis for another department. Most simply, the answer is no. Usually, this is true for pragmatic reasons. The Fundamentals Junior Paper is written in a different quarter, is usually a different length, and is usually less concerned with research, theory, and critical apparatus than theses written for other departments. One may, however, write a Junior Paper in Fundamentals that prepares the student for further work that might be taken up in a subsequent research project. In a situation like this, a student may not cut and paste portions of the Junior Paper into the subsequent thesis, but we shouldn’t be surprised to find similar ideas emerge among two related projects. The student should discuss the incorporation of previous work with her thesis adviser.
V. Fundamentals degree outline

General Education (15 courses)
Social Sciences
1. 2. 3.

Humanities
4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9.

Sciences

Major (15 courses)
Introductory Sequence Courses
1.

Text/Author Courses — one must be in a foreign language
2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.

Supporting Courses
9. 10. 11. 12.

13. Language (6th quarter)

14. Junior Paper

15. Senior Exam

Electives (12 courses)
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12.

Note:
The electives include language courses (except for the 6th quarter required course)