

Fundamentals Student Handbook
Academic Year 2021-2022

I. 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 Advisor. There are many resources to help you, and we encourage you to refer to all of these individuals frequently.

- Faculty Advisor: assigned to you by the department, but you can arrange to change advisors at any time. Contact the Coordinator for details.
- Chair of Fundamentals: Malyne Sternstein
- Program Coordinator: Alexandra Greenwald
- College Advisor: assigned to you by the college.

**Please note that while your College Advisor is well-versed in the College rules and regulations, they may not be familiar with all aspects of the Fundamentals major. We will work with them closely to answer any questions, but please feel free to copy the Program Coordinator or Chair on emails to your advisor about the major, or refer them to us when questions arise.*

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.

We want particularly to encourage you to cultivate your relationship with your Faculty Advisor. The individuals in the department are excited to work with you, but be aware that 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

Second Year

Autumn Quarter

- Enroll in the Gateway Course (see Fundamentals website, or ask the Coordinator).
- If you do not already have fluency in a foreign language, begin/continue foreign language work. 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 Advisor 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 faculty and more advanced Fundamentals students.
- Be sure to contact the Fundamentals Coordinator sometime during the quarter.
- When you were admitted to the program, you were assigned a Fundamentals Advisor. 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. Before Week 7, make an appointment to meet with your advisor. 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 advisor's research interests. Consider telling your advisor 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 advisor the kind of relationship you would like to have with each other. How does your advisor understand his or her role? How would they like to be contacted? How often will you be in touch? Note that you do not always have to have a specific question when you arrange to see your advisor. Sometimes it is nice just to check in, share what you are working on in your Fundamentals coursework, and discuss your developing interests.

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.

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 or author. You can only write about a text you have studied in a course at the College (which could include a course on several texts or authors, a Fundamentals course, or in an independent study). If you would like to write about a work that is not commonly taught in the College, you should consider taking an independent study course with an appropriate instructor (within or outside of the Fundamentals department) this quarter or next Autumn.
- Attend the Power of Books lecture.
- After Week 6 this quarter, meet with your faculty advisor to discuss your plans for the Junior Paper. You should begin to browse course listings and other resources to ascertain topics and text(s) for your Junior Paper. Summer can be a time of exploration; you and your faculty advisor should discuss the range of texts you might consider.
- All second-year students are also required to meet with their College Advisor before Week 8 of this quarter; get in touch with them and set up a meeting.
- Apply for the Charles M. Gray Summer Research grant for rising 3rd years. Funding made possible by the Gray can help with language study and research in the U.S. or internationally.
- Attend our end-of-year reception.

Third Year

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. With the exception of the Junior Paper Writing course, 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 Advisor 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, you will have a Review Conference. These meetings are not interrogations! They are designed to give you an opportunity to consider again your Fundamentals question and the way it has changed over the preceding year. It is also an opportunity for the faculty to check on your progress in the major, 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 Advisor 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.
- Revisit and revise your Fundamentals question statement.

In Week 4, 5 or 6, there will be a mandatory informational meeting about writing the Junior Paper. 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 advisor. Therefore, you should determine the text(s) you will engage with in your Junior Paper and speak with the faculty member with whom you would like to work early in the quarter.

NB: You do not have to work with the advisor you were assigned when you entered the program on your JP. If you choose to work with an instructor outside of the Fundamentals program on the JP, please let the program chair and coordinator know so that they are able to explain the aims of the JP to your JP advisor. **It is generally best to work with a Fundamentals faculty member on the JP.**

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 20-25 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 your advisor 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. The natural choice for your JP advisor would be your faculty advisor, but working with your assigned faculty advisor is not necessary if you would rather work with another member of the faculty. The choice of JP advisor should be based on a good working relationship and intellectual affinities. If you find yourself in a situation where you would like to work with an instructor outside of the program, please discuss this decision with your faculty advisor and the chair of the program. **Faculty not affiliated with the program are often unaware of its aims, spirit, and methodologies**, so, while you may work with an instructor who is not a member of the program, the chair and coordinator will need to answer any questions they may have.

Please note that a late JP disqualifies you for honors in the major. Your JP is considered late when the final draft is turned in after the established due date, unless an extension has been arranged in advance with the Program Chair and your JP advisor. No extensions can be arranged after the due date except in dire circumstances, such as serious illness or family emergency.

You should plan to write your paper in the winter quarter. You may petition the Fundamentals Chair in writing for permission to write in the spring quarter if you 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 quarter.

If you are in residence during the winter quarter, *even if you have been granted permission to write in the spring*, you must enroll in the Junior Paper Writing Seminar. The JP Seminar is a workshop that focuses on various aspects of your JP to help develop your ideas and provide a structure for meeting deadlines. Details regarding the Seminar schedule will be made available before winter registration the preceding quarter.

Winter Quarter

Take the required JP seminar. **Participation in the Junior Paper seminar for credit is a mandatory part of writing the Junior Paper. Remember that you cannot take**

more than four courses per quarter. You must therefore prioritize the JP Seminar, especially if you are double majoring.

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

All third-years are required to meet with their College Advisor before Week 8. Get in touch early to set up a meeting.

Spring Quarter

- If you didn't write your Junior Paper last quarter, it needs to be done this quarter. Occasionally, enough students successfully petition to write in Spring that another section of the JP Seminar is offered that quarter. **If it is offered, you must enroll.** Otherwise, follow the schedule provided by the Program Coordinator. **This option is only available if you successfully petitioned in the Autumn Quarter. Late petitions are not possible.**
- Attend the Power of Books lecture.
- After Week 6, meet with your advisor 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!

Fourth Year

Autumn Quarter

- All fourth-years are required to meet with their College Advisor before Week 8. It's important to touch base – this year, you need to finish taking text and supporting courses and have demonstrated language proficiency. Discuss your schedule with your advisor or with the Fundamentals Program Coordinator if you have questions about any extant requirements.
- Attend the Autumn reception.
- In Week 3 or 4, you will 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 Advisor 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.

Winter Quarter

- Toward the end of the quarter, there will be a meeting about how to prepare for the Senior Exam. **You must 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 text you studied in a course at UChicago. 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 question with reference to each of the texts you have studied. Inasmuch as the texts you have studied truly are great for your inquiry, there will be much still to explore in them. However, your exam should demonstrate facility, even mastery, of these texts. Registering for the senior examination as a course will help ensure that 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.

Spring Quarter

- Enroll in the Senior Exam course. **You must take this course for credit.**
- Week 1 of this quarter is the last time that you will be asked to submit a revision of your Fundamentals Question Statement. This gives you the opportunity to consider how the six texts on which you have chosen to be examined reflect various aspects of your question. This worksheet and question statement is the

version that will be shown to your examiners. The importance of this worksheet cannot be overstated. The exam is prepared with your concerns and questions in mind, so in many ways you have meaningful control over the composition of its questions.

- Attend the Power of Books lecture.
- Friday of Week 5, you will receive an email containing your exam from the program coordinator on or around 9:00 a.m. **Read the examination immediately to ensure you understand all the questions.** If anything on the exam requires further explanation, email the program coordinator right away. The coordinator will be your liaison with the examiner. The exam consists of 4 questions, one being the “Question question,” written by your faculty advisor in the program. You must answer the “Question question.” You may choose any question from among the other three on your exam to answer. You will have until the same time stamp of on or around 9:00 a.m. on Monday of Week 6 to answer the “Question question” and another question. Each essay answer should be around 9-10 pages long. You may, of course, refer to any texts and notes in your writing, but you may not consult with anyone. Contact the Program Coordinator with any and all questions. They will do their best to help.
- NB: If the scheduling of the senior examination conflicts with a religious observance or any other emergent reason, please let the program coordinator know at the beginning of the quarter so that we can make accommodations for you. **Please note that senior exams turned in late disqualify you for honors in the major.** Your exams are considered late when the final draft is turned in after the established due date. No extensions are possible unless you have a documented need for accommodations. No extensions can be arranged after the due date except in dire circumstances.
- Exam essays are evaluated by first and second readers of each essay before the end of Week 8. If you would like to receive feedback on your senior examination essays, please let the coordinator know. They will be able to share comments with you. 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.

Fundamentals Checklist

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>, 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.

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 advisor

Winter Quarter

- Week 7: Senior Exam orientation
- Before Week 8: 3rd-years must meet with College Advisor

Spring Quarter

- Week 2: Junior Papers due
- Week 2: Power of Books colloquium
- Week 5: Fundamentals applications due
- Week 5-6: Senior exams administered over the weekend
- Week 7: Results of admissions announced
- Before Week 8: 2nd-years must meet with College Advisor
- Week 10: End-of-year reception

Frequently Asked Questions

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 may be 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. Courses like this are often included because they are likely to work 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.

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 Advisor 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.

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 you and/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 advisor 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 others.
- 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? Are they willing to assign you a letter grade for your work? 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 Advisor 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.
- Submit this document to the registrar before the end of the third week of the quarter.

I'm confused about the language requirement. How do I fulfill it?

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.

The language requirement in Fundamentals must be fulfilled by a course. This course may not be double counted as a text course, supplementary course, or Core course.

There are four possible ways to fulfill the language requirement:

1. Third quarter (usually "203" or equivalent) of a second-year language course;
2. An independent study course taken for credit in which the text is studied in the original language
3. A course in which a text is read in its original language
4. A course in which a text is studied in English translation, but, with agreement from the course instructor, the text is read in the original. In this case, the instructor must be fluent in the target language and be able to certify (via short email to the Fundamentals Coordinator and Chair) that you have engaged deeply with the text in its original language. This certification, and whether to allow you to read the text in its original rather than in translation, is at the discretion of the instructor. The Fundamentals

Coordinator and/or Chair cannot retroactively count courses for this requirement without instructor certification and consent.

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

How are program honors determined?

Every year in spring quarter, the faculty meet to determine program honors. (Since we have been under the aegis of the Humanities Collegiate Division (HCD), we are duty bound to send our nominations to the Master of the HCD. They ultimately determine whether you receive program honors or not, but as of now there is no precedent for the Master to contradict the decision of program faculty.) The faculty take into account the following: 1) whether the JP and Senior Exams were submitted on time; 2) comments and evaluation on the JP from both the JP advisor and the second reader; 3) comments and evaluation on the senior examination essays from all readers; 4) performance in Fundamentals courses, 5) overall performance in college courses. While there is no GPA threshold for the program, you are expected to have a “healthy” GPA in order to receive a consensus among the faculty for honors nomination. The JP and senior examination essays have three possible grades: Pass with Honors, Pass, or No Pass. The pass with Honors is roughly equivalent to an A grade, the Pass to a B or C, and the No Pass to a D or F. To reach faculty consensus for honors in the program, the majority of your readers should have assigned you a Pass with Honors grade.

Please note that late JPs and senior exams disqualify you for honors in the major.

Your JP or senior exam is considered late when the final draft is turned in after the established due date, unless an extension has been arranged in advance with the Program Chair and/or your JP advisor. No extensions or considerations for honors can be arranged after the due date except in dire circumstances.

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 you should take into account that it might be particularly difficult to study for your Senior Exams while also writing a BA Thesis in another department.

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)