Chicago-Focused Courses (Winter 2020)

These courses explore aspects of Chicago's ecology, culture, politics, history, social structure, and economic life. Several engage students directly in the life of the city's communities or organizations through experiential, community-based learning. All may contribute to fulfillment of the academic requirements of the College's interdisciplinary Certificate in Chicago Studies, if taken as part of an approved sequence with other thematically-coherent classes.

Architecture of Memory – Nootan Bharani (must attend first seminar to enroll.)
ARTV 24267; ARTH 24267
This architecture studio course will explore the concept of spaces created as memorials or for the purpose of holding or preserving memories. Design projects and spatial concepts will be the main focus for the class, but students will also research existing built projects and visit spaces around the city to form a basis for understanding and analyzing space and form in this genre of architecture. Students will generate a portfolio of 2D and 3D spatial explorations throughout the quarter. For final design projects, students will choose real sites and will create a design for a memorial for an aspect of social history of the South Side and/or the Washington Park neighborhood of Chicago. Visits to exhibitions around Chicago and other current events stories will serve as starting points for project subjects.

The Business of Non-Profits: The Evolving Social Sector – Christa Velasquez
PBPL 24751
Led by an experienced practitioner, this course aims to provide both an intellectual and experiential understanding of the contemporary nonprofit sector. In addition to a seminar component examining the rapidly evolving social sector, students engage in a hands-on consulting project for an area nonprofit involving analysis, reporting, and presentation. This course satisfies the Public Policy practicum WINDOWS requirement.

City Imagined, City Observed – Luke Joyner (instructor consent required)
ARTH 24191; ARCH 24191; ENST 24191; AMER 24191; ARTV 20205; GEOG 24191
This urban design studio course takes two distinct notions of the city as its starting point: grand, imaginative plans -- utopian, unbuilt, semi-realized, real... both as aesthetic objects, and as ideas -- and how the minute flows of day-to-day life, up from the smallest scale, enter into dialogue with little built and lived details, intended or not. With Chicago as context and canvas, we will dream both big and small, search both present and past, and draw precisely on both what we dream and what we experience... seeking not to dictate what the city will be, but to expand our sense of what a city can be.

Games & Performance – Heidi Coleman
TAPS 24415
This experimental course explores the emerging genre of "immersive performance," "alternate reality," and "transmedia" gaming. For all of their novelty, these games build on the narrative strategies of novels, the performative role-playing of theater, the branching techniques of electronic literature, the procedural qualities of videogames, and the team dynamics of sports. Throughout the quarter, we will approach new media theory through the history, aesthetics, and design of immersive games, while working in labs with three Chicago-area companies including The House Theater, Mystery League, and Humans vs. Zombies.

Inequality, Household Finance, and Tax Policy – Arthur Damon Jones
PBPL 29404
The first component of this course will feature seminar discussions of income inequality and US tax policy, with a focus on income transfers such as the Earned Income Tax Credit. We will also review current policy topics in Household Finance, the study of how households save, borrow, and/or use insurance to overcome unexpected changes in household income. In addition, we will discuss the process of filing tax returns, the prevalence of income tax refunds, and the various industries, both non-profit and for-profit, that have arisen around this phenomenon. Next, students will go into the field, and work as volunteer tax preparers for a local Chicago non-profit, the Center for Economic Progress (CEP). Students will be trained as tax preparers (which requires a 3-hour training session), learn how these services are delivered, and will also learn about the various social goals and public benefits that are often coupled with this process. Tax season begins in late January, and the students will work on site at some steady frequency, until the end of the quarter. Students are also encouraged, though not required, to continue to volunteer until the end of the tax season, April 15th. Finally, students will produce one of three deliverables. They can prepare an evaluation of CEP or they can produce a policy brief, or they can produce a research proposal. This course satisfies the Public Policy windows practicum requirement.
Introduction to Black Chicago: 1893-2010 – Adam Green
HIST 27705; LLSO 22209; CRES 27705; AMER 27705
This course surveys the history of African Americans in Chicago, from before the twentieth century to the near present. In referring to that history, we treat a variety of themes, including migration and its impact, the origins and effects of class stratification, the relation of culture and cultural endeavor to collective consciousness, the rise of institutionalized religions, facts and fictions of political empowerment, and the correspondence of Black lives and living to indices of city wellness (services, schools, safety, general civic feeling). This is a history class that situates itself within a robust interdisciplinary conversation. Students can expect to engage works of autobiography and poetry, sociology, documentary photography, and political science as well as more straightforward historical analysis. By the end of the class, students should have grounding in Black Chicago’s history and an appreciation of how this history outlines and anticipates Black life and racial politics in the modern United States.

Process and Policy in State and City Government – Clayton Harris
PBPL 28501
This course consists of three interrelated sub-sections: (1) process and policy in city and state government; (2) the role played by influential, key officials in determining policy outcomes; and (3) policymaking during and after a political crisis. Issues covered include isolating the core principles driving policy at city and state levels; understanding how high-level elected officials can shape the course of policy; and determining how a political crisis affects policy processes and outcomes. Most cases are drawn from Chicago and/or Illinois.

Reading as a Writer – Chicagoans: The City in Short Story, Poem, and Nonfiction Reportage – Garin Cycholl
CRWR 12131
Focused on the basic elements of craft, an examination of how fiction writers, poets, and journalists have explored Chicago. What defines the "voice" of a writer engaged with the city's life and hustle? Is the short story an "exhausted form" in American writing? Is there a "Chicago flaneur?" How does the city reflect the narratives of the "Rust Belt" or not? Is it even possible to be "objective" about the city? Writers for discussion here include Nelson Algren, Jeffery Renard Allen, Tina De Rosa, Stuart Dybek, Nate Marshall, and Carl Sandburg.

Urban Ecology and the Nature of Cities – Alison Anastasio
ENST 23550; PBPL 23550
Urban ecology is an interdisciplinary field derived from the academic discipline of ecology. How well does classical ecological theory, typically formed from reductionist views of nature without humans, describe and predict patterns in human-dominated landscapes? Students will learn fundamental concepts in ecological theory, examine how these concepts apply to urban systems, and explore the paradigms of ecology in, of, and for cities. Readings and discussions will focus on classical research papers from the ecological literature, history of modern ecology, and contemporary approaches to studying biotic systems in cities.

Urban Geography – Michael Conzen
GEOG 23500; ENST 24660
This course examines the spatial organization and current restructuring of modern cities in light of the economic, social, cultural, and political forces that shape them. It explores the systematic interactions between social process and physical system. We cover basic concepts of urbanism and urbanization, systems of cities urban growth, migration, centralization and decentralization, land-use dynamics, physical geography, urban morphology, and planning. Field trip in Chicago region required. This course is part of the College Course Cluster, Urban Design.

Ways of Curating and Collecting – Yesomi Umolu
ARTH 26110; ARTV 20008
This seminar takes stock of contemporary currents in curating and collecting practices at a time when we are experiencing rapid expansion of the museum sector internationally, and witnessing the growing ubiquity of "curation" within the spheres of leisure, culture, entertainment and tourism. Using institutions across campus, the city of Chicago and beyond as our primary locus, we will explore curatorial and collecting strategies employed by a variety of visual arts institutions and platforms from the scale of the single-room/single curator gallery, to the museum and the international biennial. We will consider how curatorial and exhibition-making practices have evolved from the latter half of the 20th century to the present day. We will consider the socio-cultural and political implications of curatorial work, and reflect on the shifting status of the art object within collecting and non-collecting institutions. Together we will explore significant curatorial projects at a local, national and international level; we will undertake site visits as well as play host to visiting curators, artists and thinkers. Course readings will feature the writings of seminal international curators as well as selections from historians and theorists in the field of curatorial studies. Students will work through a series of independent and collaborative assignments as well as a final project that integrates curatorial theory and practice.