

# The Core



A University of Chicago education is more than a set of skills or a rite of passage. **It is a lifelong experience**—joining a conversation that spans many cultures and disciplines.

The Core brings undergraduates and faculty members together in this wide-ranging conversation. Small, discussion-based classes and an emphasis on primary texts evoke the debates that have shaped the world we live in. We examine—and reexamine—questions that philosophers, psychologists, economists, biologists, writers, and social theorists have been grappling with for centuries:

- **What defines the human experience?**
- **Are humans molded by genetics, culture, and history, or by an underlying human nature?**
- **How should we understand rational thought? Is it independent of context?**

The Core's primary texts engage a set of shared concerns and issues, but this material evolves as faculty members re-frame fundamental questions and principles across high and low cultures, in and out of Western traditions, and from the perspective of both past and present. Students may discuss Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War as a product of Greek culture but also as a lens for journalistic reporting on current events in the Middle East.

A vital tenet of the Core is that interdisciplinary collaboration can illuminate complex problems—and that this exploration is best achieved when students are well-versed in multiple disciplines.

The Core offers broad exposure to the >

“Education is not to reform students or amuse them or to make them expert technicians. It is to unsettle their minds, widen their horizons, inflame their intellects, teach them to think straight, if possible.”

**Robert Maynard Hutchins**

President of the University of Chicago, 1929–51



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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**"I treasure my Core courses because they carve out time and space for complexity. To be sure, we're often pushed to simplify—the need to act often justifies seeing things as simple. But we're complex creatures; our lives are complex experiences; the world is a complex place. For me, the Core is a rare and precious opportunity to uncover complexity and give it power; I hope my students walk away with the skills, and perhaps a taste, for grappling with it."**

**Larry McEnerney** AM'80; Senior Lecturer; Humanities Collegiate Division; Director of University Writing Programs

> arts and sciences so that all students gain a multitude of perspectives regardless of their major. In the University of Chicago community, a budding mathematician, a biology research assistant, and a linguistics enthusiast can gather around the same table to examine a given issue or text. In the classroom, students bring their growing exposure in a multitude of fields to bear on a piece of literature, a painting, or a philosophical tract. Students enrich the communal reading of a text by using mathematical principles or laws of physical science to examine a writer's musings on memory, for example.

Discussions that start in the classroom quickly spread to coffee shops, House Tables, and residence hall lounges, where veterans of the Core, professors, and students currently enrolled in Core courses continue to develop and share ideas. This conversational experience kindles enduring relationships between undergraduates and faculty, while the Core's methods of inquiry help students discover passions that guide them in their academic choices.

Students complete the Core with a heightened appreciation of enduring questions and sharpened skills in close reading, analytical writing, and critical thinking. By learning how others have posed big questions, they take up the challenge to ask their own. The result is transformative: students better understand themselves, their lives, and society, all while gaining skills applicable to their academic and professional futures.

# The Core: The Building Blocks

Most Core courses come in integrated, often interdisciplinary, sequences. Students choose their courses in consultation with their College Advisers and faculty counselors.

## 1 Humanities (2-3 courses)

Students engage with literary, historical, and philosophical texts through the Humanities Core in the first year.

### Sample courses

- Greece and Rome: Texts, Traditions, Transformations
- Readings in World Literature
- Human Being and Citizen
- Reading Cultures: Collection, Travel, Exchange
- Media Aesthetics: Image, Text, Sound

### Sample texts

- Homer, *Iliad*
- Aristotle, *Poetics*
- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
- Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (1927)
- Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'"

## 2 Social Sciences (3 courses)

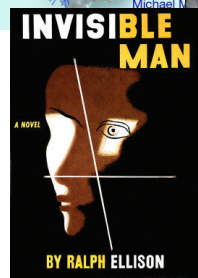
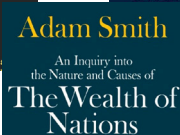
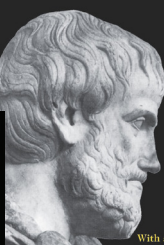
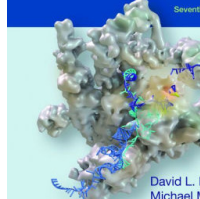
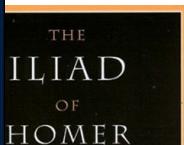
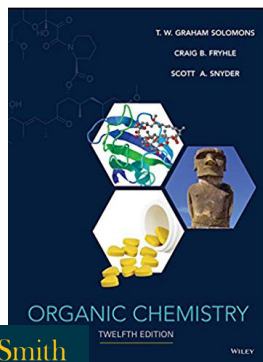
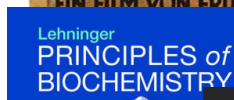
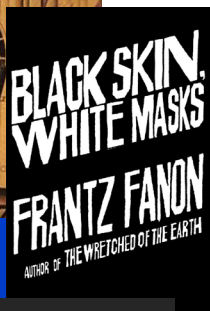
Students examine how societies are organized through the Social Sciences Core, usually in the first or second year.

### Sample courses

- Self, Culture, and Society
- Power, Identity, Resistance
- Mind
- Classics of Social and Political Thought
- Social Science Inquiry

### Sample texts

- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*
- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*
- Karl Marx, *Capital: Critique of Political Economy*
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*
- Plato, *Republic*
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*







### 3 Civilization (2-3 courses)

Students encounter the history, culture, and literature of an area of the world either on our campus or through one of our study abroad programs.

#### Sample courses

- History of European Civilization
- Jewish Civilization
- America in World Civilization
- Jerusalem in Middle Eastern Civilizations (in Jerusalem, Israel)
- Beijing: East Asian Civilizations (in Beijing, China)
- Civilization in the Western Mediterranean (in Barcelona, Spain)

### 4 Art, Music, or Drama (1-2 courses)

Students choose among courses in the theory or practice of the arts in our Art History, Music, Theater and Performance Studies, Creative Writing, or Visual Arts programs.

#### Sample courses

- Frank Lloyd Wright in Chicago and Beyond
- Introduction to Western Art Music
- Visual Language
- Staging Terror

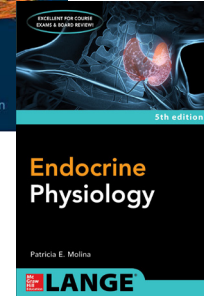
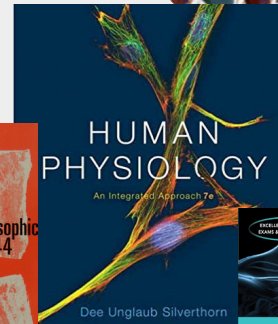
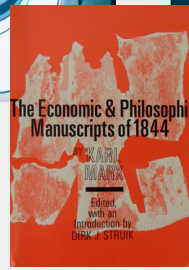
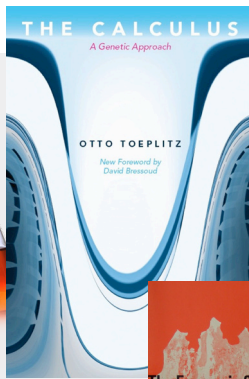
### 5 Biological Sciences (2-3 courses)

Students choose among course options that explore the process of scientific inquiry in the biological sciences.

#### Sample courses

- The Principles of Microbiology/Global Infectious Diseases
- Metabolism and Exercise
- Life through a Genomic Lens
- Introduction to Social Neuroscience

*Credit may be granted through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or placement exams.*



### 6 Physical Sciences (2-3 courses)

Students are exposed to scientific observation and reasoning in Core physical sciences courses.

#### Sample courses

- Modern Physics
- Global Warming: Understanding the Forecast
- Black Holes
- Chemistry and the Atmosphere

*Credit may be granted through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or placement exams.*

### 7 Mathematics (1-2 courses)

Students develop skills in formal reasoning and logic in mathematics courses.

#### Sample courses

- Calculus
- Elementary Statistics
- Multimedia Programming as an Interdisciplinary Art
- Honors Introduction to Computer Science

*Credit may be granted through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or placement exams.*

### 8 Foreign Language

Students are expected to demonstrate language skills equivalent to one year of college study.

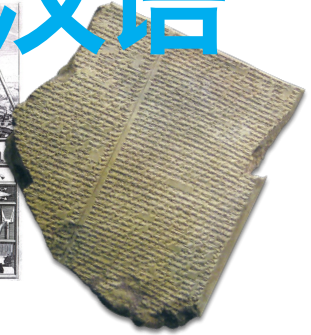
#### Among the many languages offered are

- American Sign Language
- Arabic
- Chinese
- Portuguese
- Urdu

*Credit may be granted through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or placement exams.*



# 汉语



**“The Core is premised in part on the conviction that there are key critical skills necessary not only to prepare you to master a discipline**

**once you’ve decided which one you’d like to take up, but also to give you the capacity to view your chosen discipline from a point a little bit outside of its claims and justifications. This ‘outsider perspective’ is important because to believe in the incomparable power of a disciplinary methodology is to take ideas quite seriously. (And if there’s anything that defines the University of Chicago, it is taking ideas seriously.) To take one’s ideas seriously is to believe that they will produce good results when applied to the world.”**

#### **Kenneth Warren**

Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor; Department of English; Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture; and Committee on Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities

# The Core Experience

How does the Core work? What do students gain from it? Ella shares the story of her academic career.

## 1st year

### AUTUMN QUARTER

- ☉ Reading Cultures
- ☉ Honors Calculus I
- ☉ Mechanics

### WINTER QUARTER

- ☉ Reading Cultures
- ☉ Honors Calculus II
- ☉ Electricity and Magnetism
- ☉ Biological Evolution

### SPRING QUARTER

- Introduction to Black Chicago, 1893-2010
- ☉ 19th Century French Art In the Art Institute

This class was such a great way to fulfill my Arts Core requirement. We got to examine world-famous paintings up close in the Art Institute, spending our 1.5 hour class focusing on one or two paintings at a time. Ask me all about Monet's *Stacks of Wheat* series!

- Introduction to Microeconomics
- Honors Calculus III

### SUMMER

- Methods in Urban Studies
- The summer after my freshman year I participated in UChicago's Urban Studies Summer Program! I took a public policy class called Methods in Urban Studies that examined the different tools used by city planners and local governments to craft policies.

## 2nd year

### AUTUMN QUARTER

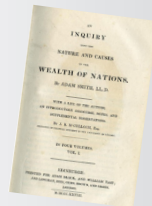
- The Elements of Economic Analysis I
- Urban Policy Analysis
- ☉ Self, Culture, and Society 1

We studied the great thinkers who developed the social sciences that exist today, from anthropology to sociology to economics.

### WINTER QUARTER

- The Elements of Economic Analysis II
- Mathematical Methods for Social Sciences
- ☉ Self, Culture, and Society II
- The Discovery of Egypt in the Age of European Enlightenment and its Aftermath

This class has been my absolute favorite over the course of my college career! My final paper traced the popularity of King Tut's artifacts across different phases in Egyptian politics.



### SPRING QUARTER

- The Elements of Economic Analysis III
- Linear Algebra
- Experimental Economics
- ☉ Self, Culture, and Society III

### SUMMER

Metcalfe Internship at the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust

## 3rd year

### AUTUMN QUARTER (STUDIED ABROAD IN PARIS, FRANCE)

- Advanced French in Paris
- ☉ European Civilization in Paris I-III

I completed the Civilizations Core requirement studying European Civilizations in Paris! As such, our Socratic-style discussions on European history were supplemented with field trips to sites around Paris and across France, including to the Louvre, Versailles, chateaus across the Loire Valley, and World War I trenches.



### WINTER QUARTER

- Topics in International Macroeconomics
- From Fossils to Fermi's Paradox: Origin and Evolution of Intelligent Life
- French Language History and Culture II

### SPRING QUARTER

- Industrial Organization
- French Language History and Culture III
- Dinosaur Science

### SUMMER

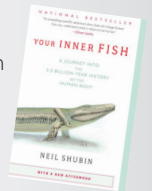
Internship in the U.S. Government Accountability Office

## 4th year

### AUTUMN QUARTER

- The Search for Extraterrestrial Life
- The 3.5 Billion Year History of the Human Body

We traced the evolutionary and developmental history of each system of the human body, even describing how you can see evidence of the Big Bang within ourselves!



- Statistical Theory and Methods I
- Undergraduate Honors Workshop

### WINTER QUARTER

- Econometrics
- Introduction to Program Evaluation
- Chernobyl: Bodies and Nature After Disaster
- Artificial Intelligence for Public Policy

### SPRING QUARTER

- Economic Policy Analysis
- Apes and Human Evolution
- Star Wars and Religion

Did you know that George Lucas referenced religious texts when creating the mythology of Star Wars?



☉ Core Course

