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?

A University of Chicago education is more than a set of skills or a rite of passage. It is a lifelong experience—being part of a dialogue that encourages conversation across cultures and disciplines.

The Core’s primary texts engage a set of shared concerns and issues, but this material evolves as faculty members reframe 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 arts and sciences so that all students gain

For more information, visit: collegeadmissions.uchicago.edu

“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 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:
  - Greek Thought and Literature
  - Readings in World Literature
  - Human Being and Citizen
  - Reading Cultures: Collection, Travel, Exchange
  - Media Aesthetics: Image, Sound, Text

- 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, and 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 Thought and Literature
- 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
- Islamic Art and Architecture, 1100 to 1500
- 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 Ecology and Evolution of Infectious Diseases
- Metabolism and Exercise
- Life through a Genomic Lens
- The Biology of Gender

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
- Introduction to Astrophysics
- 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.

“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 W. 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
How does the Core work? What do students gain from it? Below is a narrative of one student’s academic career.

1st year
AUTUMN QUARTER
- Readings in World Literature
  - Italian 101
    - My family speaks a dialect of Italian, but they never taught it to me, so I started from the beginning! Ciao, mi chiamo Marcella.
  - Calculus 131

WINTER QUARTER
- Metabolism and Exercise
  - Such a cool class! I recently ran into my old professor—over two years since I had him—and he not only remembered me but stopped to talk and wanted to know how everything was going in my life.

SPRING QUARTER
- Metabolism and Nutrition
- Readings in World Literature
  - Italian 103

2nd year
AUTUMN QUARTER
- Readings in World Literature
  - Italian 102

WINTER QUARTER
- Readings in World Literature
  - Italian 103

SPRING QUARTER
- Readings in World Literature
  - Italian 202

3rd year
AUTUMN QUARTER
- Readings in World Literature
  - Italian 201
    - Self, Culture, and Society
    - We studied great thinkers from Durkheim to Freud. The class progresses from a discussion on the social theories of economics, to one on the lived experiences of culture, to one on the concepts of self and psychology. I really enjoyed conversations with my classmates on issues of class, identity, and even magic!

SPRING QUARTER
- Readings in World Literature
  - Italian 211

4th year
AUTUMN QUARTER
- Documentary Video
  - I’m interested in broadcast journalism, so this class is definitely geared toward my career aspirations.

WINTER QUARTER
- Beginning Screenwriting
- History and Theory of Drama
- Theater and Performance Studies BA Colloquium

SPRING QUARTER
- Acting Workshop
- Writing the Graphic Novel
  - We explored texts and film from hieroglyphics to Hitchcock and learned about writing graphic novels as a business.

Core Course