

# BIG PROBLEMS

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Department Website: <https://www.franke.uchicago.edu/big-problems-curriculum> (<https://www.franke.uchicago.edu/big-problems-curriculum/>)

The Big Problems courses that follow are among a growing number of capstone experiences offered as electives to third- and fourth-year students in the College.

"Big problems" are characteristically matters of global or universal concern that intersect with several disciplines and affect a variety of interest groups. They are problems for which solutions are crucially important but not obviously available.

Big Problems courses emphasize process as well as content: learning how to creatively confront difficult intellectual and pragmatic problems wider than one's area or expertise and to consider how to deal with the uncertainty that results. This often points to the importance of working in groups. If the core curriculum provides a basis for learning and the majors develop more specialized knowledge, the Big Problems experience leads to the development of skills for thinking about and dealing with the important but unyielding issues of our time.

Big Problems courses use interdisciplinary team teaching, seeking to cross disciplines and divisions and to transcend familiar models of content, organization, and instruction.

## BIG PROBLEMS COURSES OFFERED IN 2026-2027

### **BPRO 22000. Learning How to Die. 100 Units.**

Death is inevitable, universal, and largely unspoken. "Learning How to Die" examines how individuals and societies confront the end of life-and how cultural narratives, medical institutions, and systems of care shape what that confrontation makes possible. Co-taught across literary studies and sociology, the course explores dying as both an existential problem and a socially organized process, shaped by the languages we use, the stories we tell, and the structures of care that support or constrain us. Readings include philosophical reflections on mortality, first-person accounts of terminal illness, and ethnographic analyses of medical communication, prognostic cultures, caregiving labor, and the social distribution of vulnerability. By placing narrative form in dialogue with clinical and institutional practice, the course investigates how people "learn" to die-how they make meaning under conditions of finitude, negotiate uncertainty, and develop shared frameworks for witnessing, articulating, and supporting the end of life.

Instructor(s): Maria Anna Mariani, Alexandra Tate Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): ITAL 22090, HIPS 22200, HLTH 22000

### **BPRO 22510. The Climate and Growth Challenge. 100 Units.**

The global energy and climate challenge is perhaps the most important problem society faces. It requires identifying approaches to ensure people have access to the inexpensive and reliable energy critical for human development, without causing disruptive climate change or unduly compromising health and the environment. The course pairs technical and economic analysis to develop an understanding of policy challenges in this area. Lecture topics will include the past, present, and future of energy supply and demand, global climate change, air pollution and its health consequences, selected energy technologies such as solar photovoltaics, nuclear power, unconventional oil and gas, and an analysis of theoretical and practical policy solutions in developed and emerging economies.

Instructor(s): Michael Greenstone Terms Offered: Spring

Prerequisite(s): BPRO 22510: third or fourth-year status. CEGU 22510, CCSG 19000, ECON 16550, PBPL 22510:

First-year student by permission of instructor only.

Equivalent Course(s): CCSG 19000, ECON 16550, PBPL 22510, CEGU 22510

### **BPRO 22612. Topics in Medical Ethics. 100 Units.**

Decisions about medical treatment and medical policy often have profound moral implications. Taught by a philosopher and a historian, this course will examine such issues as paternalism, autonomy, informed consent, assisted suicide, abortion, organ markets, and distributive justice in health care. (A)

Instructor(s): Dan Brudney, Michael Rossi Terms Offered: Autumn

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): HIPS 21609, HIST 25123, PHIL 21609, HLTH 21609

### **BPRO 23300. State and Water Governance in Historical Perspective. 100 Units.**

Who owns shared ecological resources, and how are their extraction, governance, and distribution regulated? What role do states play in "equitable" allocation of scarce ecological resources? We focus particularly on water, examining how competing claims over this essential resource have been negotiated from the ancient past to the present. Water management is never merely technical: it is inherently social and political. It requires cooperation, yet it can also generate conflict-even warfare. Archaeological and historical scholarship often attributes large waterworks to ancient states, and hydraulic projects have been central to modern national states building globally. But can states balance the inherent tensions between a need to manage complex water systems that run across communities and the rights of those communities for communal and ecological well-being? Centralization and efficiency can undermine citizen rights and freedoms. We will question the roots of state accountability

and representativeness in ecological distribution. We will review how ecological planning shapes identity, belonging, and the socio-economic resilience of distinct communities, and also reshapes communities' natural environment. Bringing historical and contemporary case studies into conversation, we will grapple with the difficult sociopolitical trade-offs of water governance. We will ask what alternative imaginaries of collective infrastructure and ecological governance are possible or desired.

Instructor(s): Gary Herrigel, Mehrnoush Soroush Terms Offered: Spring

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third or fourth-year status

Equivalent Course(s): ARKE 23300, PLSC 23300, PLSC 33350, NEHC 33300, CEGU 23300, CEGU 33300, NEHC 23300

#### **BPRO 24050. Understanding Practical Wisdom. 100 Units.**

Thinking about the nature of wisdom goes back to the Greek philosophers and the classical religious sages, but the concept of wisdom has changed in many ways over the history of thought. While wisdom has received less scholarly attention in modern times, it has recently re-emerged in popular discourse with a growing recognition of its potential importance for addressing complex issues in many domains. But what is wisdom? It's often used with a meaning more akin to "smart" or "clever." Is it just vast knowledge? This course will examine the nature of wisdom-how it has been defined in philosophy and psychological science, how its meaning has changed, and what its essential components might be. We will discuss how current philosophical and psychological theories conceptualize wisdom and consider whether, and how, wisdom can be studied scientifically; that is, can wisdom be measured and experimentally manipulated to illuminate its underlying mechanisms and understand its functions? Finally, we will explore how concepts of wisdom can be applied in business, education, medicine, the law, and in the course of our everyday lives. Readings will be drawn from a wide array of disciplines. The course will include lectures by philosophers and psychologists. This course is offered in association with the Chicago Moral Philosophy Project and the Good Life program (the Hyde Park Institute).

Instructor(s): A. Henly; H. Nusbaum Terms Offered: May be offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): CHDV 24050, PSYC 34060, RLST 24055, PSYC 24060

#### **BPRO 24193. Water Water Everywhere? 100 Units.**

This interdisciplinary course explores aesthetics, environmental racism, and a human rights approach to the Commons to inform our perspective on the politics and aesthetics of water from the local to the global. The course will look at issues of scarcity and abundance through the lenses of art and human rights. The course will incorporate guest speakers, including artist Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle and environmental and water rights experts and advocates. Students will consider works by artists such as Pope L, Mel Chin, Allan Kaprow, LaToya Ruby Frazier, and Fazal Sheikh, to understand how art can confront the 21st century's environmental challenges. A diverse set of texts will include relevant human rights instruments, the documentary film "Whose Water" (Kate Levy 2024); Lewis Hyde, "Common as Air: Revolution, Art, and Ownership"; and Emily Eliza Scott & Kristen Swenson, 'Contemporary Art and the Politics of Land Art' from "Critical Landscapes: Art, Space, and Politics." The course will include site visits to nearby natural areas, such as the Big Marsh wetlands, the "Toxic Donut" near Altgeld Gardens, and Lake Michigan. This course is an extension of a collaborative project at the Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry with human rights lawyer Susan Gzesh, artist Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, and curator Abigail Winograd.

Instructor(s): Susan Gzesh, Abigail Winograd Terms Offered: May be offered in 2026-2027 Note(s): Students must attend first class to confirm enrollment.

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): CHST 24193, CEGU 24193, HMRT 24193, ARTH 24193, SOSC 21005

#### **BPRO 26021. Sense & Sensibility & Science. 100 Units.**

In *Sense & Sensibility & Science*, you will learn how to better incorporate into your thinking and decision making the problem-solving techniques of science at its best. Many insights and conceptual tools from scientific thinking are of great utility for solving problems in your own day-to-day life. Yet, as individuals, as groups, as whole societies we fail to take full advantage of these methods. The focus in this course is on the errors humans tend to make, and the approaches scientific methodology has developed (and continues to develop) to minimize those errors. The course includes a discussion of the nature of science, what makes science such an effective way of knowing, how both non-scientific thinking and scientific thinking can go awry, and how we can reason more clearly and successfully as individuals, as members of groups, and as citizens of a democracy. This undergraduate course is simultaneously taught at UC Berkeley, Harvard and UChicago in spring. UChicago's course, premiered in 2024, built on a decade of experience developing and teaching the popular course at Berkeley and Harvard's adoption of its own version in 2021.

Terms Offered: Spring

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third or fourth-year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): HIPS 26021, PBPL 26021, SCPD 26021, SOSC 26021, DIGS 26021

#### **BPRO 27100. Moving Objects, Dispersed Cultures: Case Studies from China and the Middle East. 100 Units.**

In this course, we will delve into "big problems" created by the movement, relocation, or displacement of objects that are assigned special cultural, artistic, and historical values in new contexts. We will follow the movement of artifacts across both geographical and disciplinary boundaries, challenging established notions of cultural heritage and art. We often study and read ancient texts as primary sources, but we don't always pause to consider that those texts were written on physical objects like pieces of wood, leaves, or animal skin. Similarly, we're

familiar with the display of ancient artwork inside museums or galleries, but have we wondered about the journey of individual objects to those new locations? How do objects move from their original place to modern collections? How do they become art? And how do they become historical sources? Guided by an art historian and a social historian, this course presents different ways to look at "objects that move", both as sources about past societies and as mirrors for contemporary ones. Through studying examples from the history of China and the Middle East, we will reconsider concepts such as cultural heritage, national patrimony, or even art that have been taken for granted. We will learn about the different histories of the dispersal of cultural heritages in those two regions, from nation-building and colonial projects in the twentieth century to the illicit trade in antiquities and the creation of digital replicas today.

Instructor(s): Wei-Cheng Lin, Cecilia Palombo Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third or fourth-year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): ARTH 36107, NEHC 36107, ARTH 16107, EALC 16107, RLST 26107, NEHC 16107, EALC 36107

**BPRO 27155. Urban Design with Nature. 100 Units.**

This course will use the Chicago region as the setting to evaluate the social, environmental, and economic effects of alternative forms of human settlement. Students will examine the history, theory and practice of designing cities in sustainable ways - i.e., human settlements that are socially just, economically viable, and environmentally sound. Students will explore the literature on sustainable urban design from a variety of perspectives, and then focus on how sustainability theories play out in the Chicago region using a range of social science approaches and urban design tools. In Autumn 2026, the class will focus on how various tenets of sustainable urbanism-affordable housing, mobility justice, and equitable green space planning, amidst myriad pressures and risks associated with climate change. Students enrolled in Autumn 2026 must be willing to spend time outdoors, moving about campus and its surroundings, and on occasional field trips.

Instructor(s): Sabina Shaikh and Emily Talen Terms Offered: Autumn

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing, or MA enrolled.

Equivalent Course(s): ARCH 27155, CEGU 37155, CHST 27155, CEGU 27155, GISC 27155, PBPL 27156, CCSC 22502

**BPRO 27450. Why aren't humans replacing themselves? What are the consequences? 100 Units.**

The human fertility rate has fallen in half in the last 50 years, and is below replacement in more and more countries. These declines imply that the human population on Earth will peak at roughly 12 billion around 2075. Will the human population stabilize or collapse after it peaks? Will human civilization survive? This course will examine this Big Question in depth. We will first review the data demonstrating the decline in total fertility rate in countries around the world, then consider the multitude of explanations that have been proposed for this decline. Next, we will explore the consequences for human well-being and civilization of population decline. Finally, we will investigate potential solutions to the problem, with an eye to the underlying causes of fertility decline. Students from a wide variety of fields are welcome, including those with knowledge of partial differential equations, data analysis, or programming skills, but no prior experience in demography or related areas. Students will write a final paper that examines a particular cause of fertility decline and critically evaluates it, providing the best evidence for and against it. This course is cross-listed with the McKeon Center in the UChicago College.

Instructor(s): Dorian Abbot, Anup Malani Terms Offered: May be offered 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third or fourth-year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): ECON 16050

**BPRO 28300. Disability and Design. 100 Units.**

Disability is often an afterthought, an unexpected tragedy to be mitigated, accommodated, or overcome. In cultural, political, and educational spheres, disabilities are non-normative, marginal, even invisible. This runs counter to many of our lived experiences of difference where, in fact, disabilities of all kinds are the "new normal." In this interdisciplinary course, we center both the category and experience of disability. Moreover, we consider the stakes of explicitly designing for different kinds of bodies and minds. Rather than approaching disability as a problem to be accommodated, we consider the affordances that disability offers for design. This course begins by situating us in the growing discipline of Disability Studies and the activist (and intersectional) Disability Justice movement. We then move to four two-week units in specific areas where disability meets design: architecture, infrastructure, and public space; education and the classroom; economics, employment, and public policy; and aesthetics. Traversing from architecture to art, and from education to economic policy, this course asks how we can design for access.

Instructor(s): M. Friedner, J. Iverson Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): MADD 28300, HLTH 28301, CHDV 38301, MUSI 35719, CHDV 28301, MUSI 25719

**BPRO 28750. Playable Theater and Transmedia Games. 100 Units.**

Over the 21st century, the internet has shifted from an information exchange platform to a performance medium. Especially following the pandemic, the landscape of live performance and interactive art has also changed. This course invites directors, designers, performers, and writers to explore theater experiments in digital and networked environments. The term "playable theater" highlights a new constellation of participatory, interactive, immersive, site-specific, and technologically-augmented performance events in which audiences have substantial agency and can actively influence elements or outcomes of a performance. Together, we will

examine the transition from traditional stage performance to interactive online experiences, highlighting the potential of various forms such as netprov, alternate reality games (ARGs), online live-action role-playing (LARPs), live-streaming performance, interactive theater, and even video games. By integrating popular social media platforms, from Instagram to TikTok, students will push the boundaries of storytelling and audience engagement. Students will engage in a series of hands-on workshops, lectures, and design sprints as well as conversations with guest artists. Work will involve short-form, interactive original works shifting between in-person and online platforms. No prior experience with coding or video production is required, making this course accessible to all creative and collaborative minds.

Instructor(s): Patrick Jagoda, Heidi Coleman Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): TAPS 24460, ENGL 28760, MADD 20750, ARTV 30875, ARTV 20875, TAPS 34460, ENGL 48760

## BIG PROBLEMS COURSES OFFERED IN PREVIOUS YEARS

Any of these courses may be offered in the future.

### **BPRO 21500. What is Civic Knowledge? 100 Units.**

What is civic knowledge? Although civic rights and duties are supposedly universal to all citizens in a "democratic" nation, their implementation often depends on the strength of community connections and the circulation of knowledge across racial, class, and social boundaries. Focusing on the city of Chicago, we ask how citizens (in their roles as citizens) forge communities, make urban plans, and participate in civic affairs. How does the city construct the public spheres of its residents? Are the social practices of Chicagoans truly "democratic"? Could they be? What does "Chicago" stand for, as a political and cultural symbol? For both Chicagoans and their representatives, the circulation of knowledge depends not only on conventional media but also on how the city is constructed and managed through digital media.

Instructor(s): R. Schultz, M. Browning. Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): HUMA 24906, LLSO 24906, PHIL 21006, PBPL 21500

### **BPRO 22400. The Ugly American Comes Home. 100 Units.**

The aims of this course are to interrogate not only the experience of studying abroad, but also the condition of coming "home" and facing a range of needs to assimilate and articulate your experience. We address being abroad and afterward through a range of reading materials, including travel writings, philosophies of education, and considerations of narrative and perception. Writing assignments will explicitly address the challenge of integrating study abroad with other forms of knowledge and experience that characterize collegiate education.

Instructor(s): J. Ketelaar, M. Merritt Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing; completion of a study abroad program (University of Chicago program, other institution's program, or self-structured program).

### **BPRO 22700. Abortion: Morality, Politics, Philosophy. 100 Units.**

Abortion is a complex and fraught topic. Morally, a very wide range of individual, familial, and social concerns converge upon it. Politically, longstanding controversies have been given new salience and urgency by the Dobbs decision and the ongoing moves by state legislatures to restrict access to abortion. In terms of moral philosophy, deep issues in ethics merge with equally deep questions about the nature of life, action, and the body. In terms of political philosophy, basic questions are raised about the relationship of religious and moral beliefs to the criminal law of a liberal state. We will seek to understand the topic in all of this complexity. Our approach will be thoroughly intra- and inter-disciplinary, drawing not only on our separate areas of philosophical expertise but on the contributions of a series of guest instructors in law, history, and medicine. (A)

Instructor(s): Jason Bridges; Dan Brudney Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Equivalent Course(s): HIPS 22701, HLTH 22700, HMRT 22702, PHIL 22702, GNSE 32705, GNSE 22705, PHIL 32702

### **BPRO 22800. Drinking Alcohol: Social Problem or Normal Cultural Practice? 100 Units.**

Alcohol is the most widely used psychoactive agent in the world, and, as archaeologists have recently demonstrated, it has a very long history dating back at least 9,000 years. This course will explore the issue of alcohol and drinking from a trans-disciplinary perspective. It will be co-taught by an anthropologist/archaeologist with experience in alcohol research and a neurobiologist who has experience with addiction research. Students will be confronted with literature on alcohol research from anthropology, sociology, history, biology, medicine, psychology, and public health and asked to think through the conflicts and contradictions. Selected case studies will be used to focus the discussion of broader theoretical concepts and competing perspectives introduced in the first part of the course. Topics for lectures and discussion include: fermentation and the chemistry and pharmacology of alcohol; the early history of alcohol; histories of drinking in ancient, medieval, and modern times; alcohol and the political economy; alcohol as a cultural artifact; styles of drinking and intoxication; how is alcohol metabolized; addiction; how does alcohol affect sensations; social problems; alcohol and religion; alcohol and health benefits; comparative case studies of drinking.

Instructor(s): M. Dietler, W. Green Terms Offered: May be offered in 2027-2028

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 25310, BIOS 02280, HLTH 25310

**BPRO 22900. People in Motion: Rethinking Transit in Chicago and Beyond. 100 Units.**

How do you get from A to B? Within and between today's urbanized areas, that seemingly simple question has become one of the most fraught and intractable problems. This course seeks to address questions about public transit across scales, from pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure at the level of individual intersections and blocks up to regional train networks and beyond. Like other design studio courses, the class will be project-based, and will ask students to develop a wide understanding of existing systems, but also to learn through creative design projects that expand their sense of what's possible. After working together to understand many existing transit solutions across different scales, to come to terms with and document Chicago's transit landscape, and to dream speculatively about untested transit possibilities both low- and high-tech, students will focus on building a portfolio of creative suggestions for their respective "clients" (e.g., the University of Chicago, the 4th Ward Alderman). Alongside this project work, assigned readings and explorations around Chicago will immerse students in the culture and philosophy of moving people and things, across different moments past, present and future.

Instructor(s): E. Carver, L. Joyner Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): ARTH 22909, CHST 22900, ARCH 22909, CEGU 22900

**BPRO 23100. Food: From Need to Want, or, Ethics and Aesthetics. 100 Units.**

There is nothing more integral nor intimate to our survival than the act of eating. More than simply sustenance, food's pleasure extends exponentially into cultural and global concerns that include climate change, resource distribution, and economic policies. From the relative smallness of, for example, snacking on a handful of raisins, the circumstances that involve its growth, production, distribution, and costs are far-reaching. Growing awareness of what we eat, where it comes from, and how it is produced necessarily addresses need as well as a complex set of aesthetic and ethical issues that spans disciplines and practices ranging from the personal, that is, what you put in your mouth, to the political, that is, economics, identity, labor, and the environment. The goal of this course is to engage a wholistic approach to scholarship, spanning the theoretical and the textual, the experiential and the aesthetic, the ethical and the social. We will address the rich importance of food not only within an academic context but also within our community including chefs, urban foragers, and farmers/growers as lecturers. In each week's session, students will be provided with texts as well as other modes of knowledge production and acquisition including film, art, and gardens. Through this heterogeneous process the course is designed to set disciplinary, material, and temporal borders aside so that students, faculty, and the larger community can have these conversations in dialogue.

Instructor(s): L. Letinsky Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): CEGU 20023, ARTV 20023, ARTV 30023, ARTH 29940, HLTH 23100

**BPRO 23200. Understanding One Another in a World of Evil. 100 Units.**

The moral turn in the human sciences has led to an increasing emphasis on the problem of evil. While the Holocaust is frequently presented as the paradigmatic case of evil, this problem has also been used to underscore the unredressed wrongs of slavery and genocide in the history of empire and colonialism. This course aims to take the problem of evil seriously while also raising a doubt about the certainty with which some scholars have characterized evil as a problem of willful or culpable wrongdoing. We aim to think the problem of evil alongside and through a related problem, namely how we come to understand one another as shared participants in a moral universe. This will lead us to consider a series of subsidiary questions: How do we understand one another when ethical stances strike us as unacceptable or, more emphatically, inhuman? Under what conditions do we characterize acts that seem to conform to rival systems of value as evil? In other words, to what extent is the problem of evil a problem of understanding? And do our pronouncements about evil necessarily carry certain assumptions about transhistorical and transcultural human values? Our course resources include works by Ludwig Wittgenstein on the problem of human understanding, Hannah Arendt's account of the problem of evil, and Stanley Cavell's account of the problem of acknowledgement, as well as a number of film screenings.

Instructor(s): A. Brandel, D. Grant Terms Offered: May be offered in 2027-2028

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): PLSC 23200, CCCT 23200, ANTH 23200, DEMS 23200, HIST 22804

**BPRO 23500. The Organization of Knowledge. 100 Units.**

This course explores several structures of knowledge that students may have encountered in their core and specialized education, with the goal of enabling students to identify and explore the implications of these different structures. We ask whether all knowledge is relative, and if so, to what? When things are structured differently, does that mean that knowledge is lost? Or are there several diverse ways of structuring knowledge, each of which may be viable? We read a wide range of classical and modern thinkers in various disciplines.

Instructor(s): William Sterner (with the late Wayne Booth and Herman Sinaiko) Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): HUMA 23502, HIPS 23000

**BPRO 23600. Social Context, Biology, and Health. 100 Units.**

We take for granted our relationships with other people as fundamental. Yet when these connections are absent or disrupted, our minds and biology are likewise disrupted. Epidemiological studies have now clearly established a relationship between social isolation and both mental and physical health. This course adopts an

integrative interdisciplinary approach that spans the biological to sociological levels of analysis to explore the interactions involved and possible mechanisms by which the social world gets under the skin to affect the mind, brain, biology, and health.

Instructor(s): M. McClintock, L. Waite (with the late J. Cacioppo) Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): PSYC 25300

**BPRO 23760. The Social Brain: Social Isolation and Loneliness. 100 Units.**

The past two decades have witnessed a remarkable rise in the number of investigations published on the social brain. The discoveries conveyed by the titles of many of these reports (e.g., the neural basis of love, altruism, morality, generosity, trust) have piqued the interest of young investigators, funding agencies, the media, and laypeople alike. Such attention is a double-edged sword, however, as errors are exaggerated in importance, and oversimplifications create false expectations and, ultimately, disillusionment in what the field can contribute.

It is, of course, one thing to assume that neural processes underlie all psychological phenomenon, it is another to claim that a given brain region is the biological instantiation of complex psychological functions like the self, empathy or loneliness. The purpose of this course is to examine opportunities and challenges in this field primarily through research on two of the most important topics in the field: social isolation and empathy.

Instructor(s): L. Hawkey (with the late John Cacioppo) Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing. This course does not meet requirements for the biological sciences major.

Equivalent Course(s): BIOS 29324, PSYC 23760

**BPRO 23800. The Affect System. 100 Units.**

The term "affect" typically refers to feelings beyond those of the traditional senses, with an emphasis on the experience of emotions and variations in hedonic tone. The structure and processes underlying mental contents are not readily apparent, however, and most cognitive processes occur unconsciously with only selected outcomes reaching awareness. Over millions of years of evolution, efficient and manifold mechanisms have evolved for differentiating hostile from hospitable stimuli and for organizing adaptive responses to these stimuli. These are critically important functions for the evolution of mammals, and the integrated set of mechanisms that serve these functions can be thought of as an "affect system." It is this affect system-its architecture and operating characteristics, as viewed from neural, psychological, social, and political perspectives-that is the focus of the course.

Instructor(s): E. Oliver, S. Cacioppo (with the late John Cacioppo) Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): PSYC 23880, PLSC 23810

**BPRO 23900. Biological and Cultural Evolution. 100 Units.**

This course draws on readings in and case studies of language evolution, biological evolution, cognitive development and scaffolding, processes of socialization and formation of groups and institutions, and the history and philosophy of science and technology. We seek primarily to elaborate theory to understand and model processes of cultural evolution, while exploring analogies, differences, and relations to biological evolution. This has been a highly contentious area, and we examine why. We seek to evaluate what such a theory could reasonably cover and what it cannot.

Instructor(s): W. Wimsatt, S. Mufwene Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing or consent of instructor required; core background in evolution and genetics strongly recommended.

Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 38615, NCDV 27400, CHDV 33930, PHIL 22500, CHDV 23930, CHSS 37900, LING 11100, LING 39286, ANTH 28615, PHIL 32500, HIPS 23900

**BPRO 24150. Romantic Love: Cultural, Philosophical, and Psychological Aspects. 100 Units.**

This double-credit course combines humanistic and social scientific disciplines to examine the phenomenon of romantic love-a "big problem" in practical, theoretical, and cultural senses. The course starts by comparing representations of romantic love experiences in visual, musical and literary arts and myths. After exploring what may be specific to this form of love, we address two further issues: the role and sources of non-rational experience in romantic love, and the role of romantic love in modern marriage. Illumination of these topics is sought through the discussion of humanistic and social scientific texts and cinematic presentations.

Instructor(s): D. Orlinsky, K. Mitova Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 24150, HUMA 24150, CHDV 24150

**BPRO 24200. Psychoneuroimmunology. 100 Units.**

This course covers all aspects of neuroimmunoendocrinology at the molecular, cellular, and organismal and social levels.

Instructor(s): M. McClintock, J. Quintans Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): BIOS 02370, PSYC 34100, PSYC 24150, BPRO 44140

**BPRO 24400. Living the Body Through Technology. 100 Units.**

We live with and in our bodies, we cannot experience the world without them. Yet, much of the time, we remain unaware of how our bodies are shaped by the technological infrastructures that surround us. This course

examines the complex ways in which technologies, broadly defined, mediate and transform our experiences of the body and influence conceptions of health and well-being. Drawing on philosophical, anthropological and artistic perspectives, we will explore how contemporary technologies influence not only the conditions of the human body but also our very understanding of embodiment in modern life. Key questions include: How do brain scans and real-time ultrasounds reshape our inner sense of self? In what ways do organ transplants challenge traditional notions of bodily integrity and personal identity? What are the political and embodied implications of technological augmentations, from cochlear implants to bionic breasts? How do profit-driven markets shape the development of these technologies? We will also investigate how artists use new technologies to narrate embodied experiences of illness or transformation, and how fitness trackers and biometric devices are redefining concepts of health and well-being. The course will conclude with an exploration of consciousness and the mind, focusing on near-death experiences and the altered states brought on by psychedelics. Through critical reflection, we will generate new possibilities for living in and through our bodies.

Instructor(s): D. Foerster, E. Miresghi Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): RLST 27804, HIPS 27804, MADD 14400, HLTH 24400

**BPRO 24500. Language and Globalization. 100 Units.**

Globalization has been a buzz word in our lives over the past few decades. It is also one of those terms whose varying meanings have become more and more challenging to characterize in a uniform way. The phenomena it names have been associated with important transformations in our cultures, including the languages we speak. Distinguishing myths from facts, this course articulates the different meanings of globalization, anchors them in a long history of socioeconomic colonization, and highlights the specific ways in which the phenomena it names have affected the structures and vitalities of languages around the world. We learn about the dynamics of population contact in class and their impact on the evolution of languages.

Instructor(s): S. Mufwene Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Equivalent Course(s): LING 37500, LING 27500, ANTH 27705, ANTH 47905

**BPRO 24600. Moments in Atheism. 100 Units.**

Atheism is as old as religion. As religion and its place in society have evolved throughout history, so has the standing and philosophical justification for non-belief. This course examines the intellectual and cultural history of atheism in Western thought from antiquity to the present. We are concerned with the evolution of arguments for a non-religious worldview, as well as with the attitude of society toward atheism and atheists.

Instructor(s): S. Bartsch, Staff Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): CLCV 22400, RLST 25200, HIST 29402

**BPRO 24800. Complex Problem: World Hunger. 100 Units.**

Few of our policymakers are experts in economics, agronomy, food science, and molecular biology, yet all of these disciplines are essential for developing strategies to end world hunger. Choosing one country as a test case, we look at the history, politics, governmental structure, population demographics, and agricultural challenges. We then study the theory of world markets, global trade, and microeconomics of developing nations, as well as the promise and limitation of traditional breeding and biotechnology.

Instructor(s): J. Malamy, Staff Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): SOSC 26900, BIOS 02810

**BPRO 24900. Biology and Sociology of AIDS. 100 Units.**

This interdisciplinary course deals with current issues of the AIDS epidemic.

Instructor(s): H. Pollack, J. Schneider Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): SSAD 65100, BIOS 02490

**BPRO 25100. Evolutionary Theory and Its Role in the Human Sciences. 100 Units.**

The course's aim is two-fold: (1) an examination of the origins and development of Darwin's theory from the early nineteenth century to the present; and (2) a selective investigation of the ways various disciplines of the human sciences (i.e., sociology, psychology, anthropology, ethics, politics, economics) have used evolutionary ideas.

Instructor(s): R. Richards, Staff Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): HIPS 25801, HIST 25004, PHIL 25123

**BPRO 25200. Body and Soul: Approaches to Prayer. 100 Units.**

Why do we pray? Why do we experience prayer practice as reaching out towards an intentional being whom we cannot (except in representation) touch, see, or hear? This course approaches an answer to that question by looking at the way we pray, particularly in a Christian context. What kinds of bodily engagement do we find in prayer; what impact might prayer practice have upon our bodies; what bodily features of prayer might help to explain why its practice has been so compelling to so many for so many years?

Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): RLST 28800

**BPRO 25400. Jews and Christians in the Middle East. 100 Units.**

Minorities around the world today invite questions about the prospects of pluralism and tolerance in modern societies. This course will explore these long-studied questions by examining the case of Jews and Christians in the Middle East, as well as its tangled histories with Muslims and Jews in Mediterranean Europe. Co-taught by a historian of Jews in Iraq and an anthropologist of Copts in Egypt, we will explore histories and ethnographies to consider the political, social, and religious dimensions of minority communities. Our syllabus also blends various literary genres and forms of media with academic scholarship to explore various voices in the conversation about Jews and Christians in the Middle East—from novels, films, and poetry to theological tracts and political treatises. We raise the following questions throughout our course: What terms for coexistence have governed Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Mediterranean? How are religious practices and traditions linked to histories of rule? How do ideologies (e.g., nationalism, secularism, communism) shape the way minorities understand themselves and how society understands them?

Instructor(s): O. Bashkin, A. Heo Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): RLST 20231, NEHC 20585, JWSC 26215

**BPRO 25500. Art and Human Rights. 100 Units.**

This seminar-style course will explore historical and contemporary interventions in visual and performative artistic practices with human rights. Co-taught by a historian and theater-maker, the course will consider various paradigms for looking at how artists work on human rights. Course work will include critical readings, viewings of artistic work, and direct conversations with artists. Students will also participate in a multi-day summit on campus (April 29-May 2) that will bring distinguished artists from throughout the world to address the question "What is an artistic practice of human rights, conceptually, aesthetically and pragmatically?" Students will be given the option to produce either an academic or artistic final project.

Instructor(s): M. Bradley, L. Buxbaum Danzig Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): HIST 29906, ARTV 20009, HMRT 25502, TAPS 25510

**BPRO 25600. How Does It Feel to Be an Outlier? Narratives of Medical 'Otherness'. 100 Units.**

Ideas of what is "normal" and what is "different" are fundamental organizing concepts in scientific and humanistic thinking. Writers in both the sciences and the humanities use these concepts particularly when constructing narratives about how individuals experience selfhood and the world. This course examines a body of writings that depict the lives of those who identify, or are identified, as outliers. Students will approach this topic through medical case studies; through autobiographies and biographies about the experience of being physical or mental exceptions; and through writings by and about doctors, patients, medical researchers, and people who are the subjects of medical research. How do scientists, biographers, journalists, and others capture the experience of being different? What are the aims of outlier narratives? What ethical questions surround these writings? How do such narratives underscore or undercut concepts of what is "normal" and what is "different"? In addition to surveying the landscape of outlier literature, students will research and write an outlier narrative in the form of a medical case study, biography, journalistic profile, or memoir.

Instructor(s): P. Mason, N. Titone Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 45613, ENGL 25613

**BPRO 25700. What Does it Mean to be Free to Speak? 100 Units.**

The idea of freedom of speech possesses tremendous political and cultural power in global discourses about what it means to live a good life in a good society. It is considered an indispensable precondition for the flourishing of the sciences and the arts, as well as for the proper functioning of democracy. Courts interpret freedom of speech as one of the core liberal rights. Public and private institutions like the University of Chicago proclaim a commitment to freedom of speech. And claims about the importance of freedom of speech pepper public discourse. But what does it mean to be free to speak? This course will explore this question historically, philosophically, and ethnographically. Students will learn about the fundamental sociality of human beings and think collectively about the implications that the indissoluble and necessary entanglement with others has for developing an inner life, the generation of ideas, and the willingness to articulate these ideas within various social contexts. Students will also learn about the different ways in which freedom of speech and thought has been understood over time, and the concrete political and social struggles that have shaped the development of ideas about freedom of speech. Class discussion will also explore how institutional arrangements shape ideas and practices of free speech.

Instructor(s): A. Glaeser, G. Lakier Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): SOCI 20528, SOCI 30528

**BPRO 25800. Are we doomed? Confronting the End of the World. 100 Units.**

We may be at a pivotal point in human history, with civilization facing unprecedented threats including nuclear Armageddon, climate change, and pandemics. This class will explore our potential for self-inflicted catastrophe, as well as approaches for mitigating these perils. We will consider this through readings and engagement with a range of speakers focused on various imminent perils, from the perspective of a wide

range of disciplinary perspectives, including sociology, philosophy, theology, anthropology, statistics, physics, astrophysics, economics, law, business, and the arts.

Instructor(s): D. Holz, J. Evans Terms Offered: Winter. Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 25800, ASTR 21700, KNOW 21700, SOCI 30531, SOCI 20531

**BPRO 25900. Digitizing Human Rights. 100 Units.**

In an era in which disruptive technologies have hijacked our consciousness and computer code has woven itself into the fabric of our existence, the lines between the virtual and the physical are increasingly blurred, and the nature of human existence itself increasingly uncertain. Digitizing Human Rights invites you to ponder, question, and even reshape the future of the species. We'll consider digital surveillance, data consent, access to tech, online agency, algorithmic bias and the future of artificial intelligence, among other topics. Drawing on cross-disciplinary perspectives, the course aims to illuminate the often misunderstood aspects of the digital age with the goal of creating an annotated digital document to serve as a blueprint for steering humanity towards a more equitable and just -- and perhaps a more secure -- future. Annotations will draw on a broad array of philosophical traditions and contextualize current issues and debates. We will also problematize the document itself to build into our work a consideration of the digital form through which we are thinking and representing claims about humanity, morality, truth, and justice, for example, that are entailed in the project of "human rights." The class will meet both in small groups and the larger seminar to refine the provisions and annotations, review progress, and shape the document as a whole.

Instructor(s): J. Spruill, N. Briz Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): HMRT 25900, DEMS 25900, MADD 25900

**BPRO 26030. The Nuclear Age. 100 Units.**

Seventy-five years ago a group of scientists launched the first sustained nuclear chain reaction, commonly known as CP-1, at the University of Chicago under Stagg Field. This course will be part of the commemoration and reflection taking place across the University this fall. Its goal will be to explore the ensuing Nuclear Age from different disciplinary perspectives by organizing a ring-lecture. Each week's lecture, delivered by faculty from fields across the university (for instance, Physics, Biomedicine, Anthropology, and English), will be followed by a discussion section to synthesize and integrate not only the material from the weekly lectures, but the many events happening at the University this fall. CP-1 was not only a scientific achievement of the highest magnitude, but also a civilization-changing event that remains at the boundary of the thinkable.

Instructor(s): D. L. Nelson Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Second, third, or fourth-year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): HIST 25424, SIGN 26031, ENGL 26030

**BPRO 26050. Memory, Commemoration & Mourning. 100 Units.**

This course focuses on the manner in which we make use of the past, the personal past, the collective past, and the place of social and historical change in retelling and rewriting life-history and history. The course begins with a discussion of memory, conceptions of the personal and historic past, and such related issues as nostalgia, mourning, and the significance of commemoration in monument and ritual. These issues are explored in a number of topics such as twentieth-century war memorials, high school and college reunions, and the Holocaust and its representation in contemporary European society.

Instructor(s): Taught by the late Bertram Cohler and the late Peter Homans Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Equivalent Course(s): AASR 30001, CHDV 27102, PSYC 25450, FNDL 23312, RLST 28102

**BPRO 26300. Globalization: History and Theory. 100 Units.**

This course makes sense of globalization as a historical phenomenon focusing primarily on the long twentieth century, but with a look back into the "deep history" of the making of the contemporary world. While the course has a theoretical bent, it should be taken as an introduction into modern history. It has three goals in particular: (1) It introduces the main concepts and theories of globalization. (2) It explores key moments, processes, and events in the annals of globalization. (3) It highlights the nature of contentions over the terms of global order.

Instructor(s): M. Geyer, Staff Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): HIST 29901

**BPRO 26400. Movies and Madness. 100 Units.**

We propose to investigate representations of madness in fictional, documentary, and experimental film.

We divide the topic this way to emphasize the different dimensions of cinematic address to questions of mental illness, and the ways that film genres imply distinct formal and epistemological conventions for the representation of insanity. Documentary ranges from instructional and neutral reportage, to polemical, essayistic interventions in the politics of psychiatry and the asylum, the actual conditions of mental illness in real historical moments. Documentary also includes the tendency in new media for "the mad" to represent themselves in a variety of media. With experimental film, our aim will be to explore the ways that the cinematic medium can simulate experiences of mania, delirium, hallucination, obsession, depression, etc., inserting the spectator into the subject position of madness. We will explore the ways that film techniques such as shot-matching, voice-over, montage, and special effects of audio-visual manipulation function to convey dream sequences, altered states of

consciousness, ideational or perceptual paradoxes, and extreme emotional states. Finally, narrative film we think of as potentially synthesizing these two strands of cinematic practice, weaving representations of actual, possible, or probable situations with the special effects of mad subjectivity. Our emphasis with narrative film will be to focus-not simply on the mentally ill subject as hero.

Instructor(s): W. J. T. Mitchell, J. Hoffman Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 38703, ARTV 36411, CMST 35550, ARTH 36905, ENGL 28703, ARTH 26905, CMST 25550, ARTV 26411

**BPRO 26500. Picturing Words/Writing Images (Studio) 100 Units.**

What is the relationship between reading and looking? Images in mind and images on paper-words in mind and on the page-we will explore the intersection of these different ways to think, read, and look, as we make poems, drawings, paintings, etc., in class. We will investigate the problem of representing language as it is expressed in the work produced in class. Studying works by contemporary visual artists like Jenny Holzer and Ann Hamilton, and practicing poets such as Susan Howe and Tom Phillips will inform our investigation. The course will feature visits to our studio by contemporary poets and visual artists, who will provide critiques of student work and discussion of their own ongoing projects. These visitors will help to frame our artistic and literary practice within the ongoing conversation between word and image in modern culture. We will ask, what are the cognitive, phenomenological, social, and aesthetic consequences of foregrounding the pictorial/visual aspect of alphabetical characters? (C, H)

Instructor(s): J. Stockholder, S. Reddy Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing. Previous experience in an arts studio or creative writing course recommended, but not required.

Equivalent Course(s): CRWR 46341, ARTV 36901, ENGL 34319, CRWR 26341, ENGL 24319, ARTV 26901

**BPRO 26600. Antonioni's Films: Reality and Ambiguity. 100 Units.**

In this in-depth study of several Antonioni films, our eye is on understanding his view of reality and the elements of ambiguity that pervade all of his films. Together, as a film scholar and physicist, we bring out these aspects of his work together with his unique cinematic contributions. This course introduces students to this poet of the cinema and the relevance of Antonioni's themes to their own studies and their own lives.

Instructor(s): Yuri Tsivian, Staff Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): CMST 26801, ARTH 28904, HUMA 26600

**BPRO 26700. Mythical History, Paradigmatic Figures: Caesar, Augustus, Charlemagne, Napoleon. 100 Units.**

What is the process by which some historical figures take on mythical proportions? This course examines four case studies of conquerors who attained sovereign power in times of war (conquest, civil war, revolution), who had a foundational role in empire-building, and who consciously strove to link themselves to the divine and transcendent. Their immense but ambiguous legacies persist to this day. Although each is distinct as a historical individual, taken together they merge to form a paradigm of the exceptional leader of epic proportions. Each models himself on exemplary predecessors: each invokes and reinvents myths of origin and projects himself as a model for the future. Basic themes entail mythic history, empire, the exceptional figure, modernity's fascination with antiquity, and the paradox of the imitability of the inimitable.

Instructor(s): M. Lowrie, R. Morrissey Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): CLAS 36713, SCTH 30411, FREN 26701, CLCV 26713, FREN 36701, FNLD 22912

**BPRO 26750. Anxiety. 100 Units.**

The phenomenon of anxiety emerged as one of the leading psychological disorders of the 20th and 21st centuries. Worrying ourselves into the realm of the pathological, we now have a requisite measure of anxiety for every prescribed stage of life. But why are we so anxious? Considering its prevalence in everyday life, the concept and theories of anxiety have been employed surprisingly seldom as a way into film, fiction, and art. In this course we examine the modern origin of contemporary discourses specific to anxiety and their unique manifestation in cultural artifacts. To understand the complex of anxiety in the so-called Western world, we rely on the theories of Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Alenka Zupančič; fiction by Stoker, Schnitzler, Kafka, and Sebald; and film by Haneke, Kubrick, Ophuls, and Hitchcock. We will also have guest speakers from the fields of clinical psychiatry, geriatric medicine, philosophy, and comparative anthropology.

Instructor(s): M. Sternstein, A. Flannery Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): MAPH 36750, GRMN 26715, ENGL 24260

**BPRO 26880. Border Crossings: Reading and Making the Literature of Migration. 100 Units.**

In this Big Problems course on the literature of migration, students will analyze and create narratives about human beings moving across time and place, crossing borders both literal and metaphorical. We will consider the lives, perspectives, and voices of characters who are forged and re-forged by their cultural, linguistic, and familial contexts. Migration itself represents a physical relocation; writing about migration both expresses and requires an intellectual relocation. We will examine carefully questions of audience: for whom does the literature of migration exist, other members of migrant communities? Hosts? Both? What are the motivations for the work; does the literature of migration accelerate a sense of belonging, issue challenges, create a new form of hybrid

identity? Does it keep a record that's retrospective about the past, and/or contain in its very language the present tense? What does it ask or suggest about our future? This is a multi-genre course, in which we will read fiction, poetry, and non-fiction about migration. Students will write both critical and creative projects, and research will be a key component of the course, making use of nearby archives and guest visits. Weekly readings include texts from Euripides' *Medea* or Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*, and will guide our consideration not only of how to read the literature of migration, but also of how to tie research into critical and creative projects on migration.

Instructor(s): M. Ellmann, R. DeWoskin Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 26880, JWSC 26880, ENGL 46880

**BPRO 26900. Communicating Science: For Peers and the Public. 100 Units.**

This architectural studio course explores strategies for effectively communicating and presenting science to the public in a campus setting. Students will discover a compelling science story generated by UC scholars and present it as a multimedia exhibit proposal. Student groups also will collaborate on the development of a plan for a campus science exhibition space and science quad involving design charettes led by architects and landscapers. The class emphasizes verbal, visual, and spatial communication methods and incorporates scholarly writing, podcasts, websites, social media communication, design charettes, and 3D model-making. Students will hone their skills to effectively communicate breaking science in an engaging manner in a new campus setting.

Instructor(s): Paul Sereno, Chana Haouzi, Jeremy Manier Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third or fourth-year standing. This course does not require prior experience, and all are welcome. If you would like to join the class, please complete this consent form at [arthistory.uchicago.edu/archconsent](http://arthistory.uchicago.edu/archconsent) so we can learn more about you.

Equivalent Course(s): ARCH 26900, CHST 26900, SCPD 26900, ARTH 26809, MADD 26900

**BPRO 27000. Perspectives on Imaging. 100 Units.**

Taught by an imaging scientist and an art historian, this course explores scientific, artistic, and cultural aspects of imaging from the earliest attempts to enhance and capture visual stimuli through the emergence of virtual reality systems in the late twentieth century. Topics include the development of early optical instruments (e.g., microscopes, telescopes), the invention of linear perspective, the discovery of means to visualize the invisible within the body, and the recent emergence of new media. We also consider the problem of instrumentally mediated seeing in the arts and sciences and its social implications for our image-saturated contemporary world.

Instructor(s): P. La Riviere, Barbara Stafford Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): CMST 27300, BIOS 02927, CMST 37300, HIPS 24801, ARTH 26900, ARTH 36900

**BPRO 27200. Sensing the Anthropocene. 100 Units.**

In this co-taught course between the departments of English (Jennifer Scappettone) and Visual Arts (Amber Ginsburg), we will deploy the senses most overlooked in academic discourse surrounding aesthetics and urbanism—hearing, taste, touch, and smell—to explore the history and actuality of Chicago as a site of anthropogenic changes. Holding the bulk of our classes out of doors, we will move through the city seeking out traces of the city's foundations in terraforming actions such as the filling in of swamp, the production of the river as pipeline, and the creation of transportation and industrial infrastructure—all with uneven effects on human and nonhuman inhabitants. Coursework will combine readings in the history and theory of the Anthropocene (the proposed geological epoch in which humans have become the dominant force shaping Earth's geology, climate, and ecosystems) with examples of how artists and activists have made these changes visible, tangible, audible, and otherwise apprehensible, providing forums for playful documentation and annotations as we draw, score, map, narrate, curate and collate our sensory experience of this all-encompassing yet elusive phenomenon into a final experimental book project. Admission by consent: Beginning February 16, please send to both [jscape@uchicago.edu](mailto:jscape@uchicago.edu) and [amberginsburg@gmail.com](mailto:amberginsburg@gmail.com): a short statement (as brief as a couple sentences) sketching your academic background/major/interests and specifying your interest (general or specific).

Instructor(s): J. Scappettone, A. Ginsburg Terms Offered: May be offered in 2027-2028

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third or fourth-year standing; room for several graduate students. Admission by consent: Beginning February 16, please send to both [jscape@uchicago.edu](mailto:jscape@uchicago.edu) and [amberginsburg@gmail.com](mailto:amberginsburg@gmail.com): a short statement (as brief as a couple sentences) sketching your academic background/major/interests and specifying your interest (general or specific).

Equivalent Course(s): ARTV 22322, ARCH 22322, CRWR 27250, ENGL 47700, ENGL 27700, ARTV 32322, COGS 26203, CEGU 27700, CHST 27200

**BPRO 27300. Harm Reduction and HIV Prevention in the Overdose Era. 100 Units.**

We will discuss some of the debates around harm reduction, some of the cutting-edge harm reduction strategies, HIV prevention and the communities and populations most impacted by overdose and other related health conditions.

Instructor(s): Harold Pollack, John A. Schneider Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third and fourth-year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 27301

**BPRO 27500. Reimagining Our Future: Past, Present & Future of Campus-Neighborhood Relations. 100 Units.**

The history, current status, and future of three neighborhoods adjacent to campus (Hyde Park, Washington Park, and Woodlawn) are the focus of this ground-breaking course that could not be offered at a more pivotal time. How have these neighborhoods and their relationship with campus evolved, what is their character and current status as healthy communities, and what actionable propositions are in play or could be considered for continued revitalization and positive campus interaction? Given that change on the horizon is inevitable, how best to protect current residents from displacement or other negative consequences?

Instructor(s): P. Sereno, C. Skrable Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): PQ: third or fourth-year standing. Students should opt into a discussion section that fits their schedule.

Equivalent Course(s): PBPL 27500, RDIN 27500, CHST 27500, PARR 27500

**BPRO 27600. Creation and Creativity. 100 Units.**

This seminar explores several creation stories from anthropological, literary, philosophical, and psychological perspectives. We compare the accounts of the beginning in Genesis, Hesiod's Theogony, Ovid's Metamorphoses, Bhagavad Gita, the Maya's Popol Vuh, and other sources, including Native American ones. We explore the ways cosmic creation has been imagined in world culture. We also delineate human literary creativity and ask about the relationship between individual creativity and the cultural myths of creation. We consider at least one modern theory of the beginning of the universe.

Instructor(s): Katia Mitova, the late Paul Friedrich Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 27610

**BPRO 27800. Science and Christianity. 100 Units.**

Both Christianity and science have had a critical impact on the development of Western society. Can they continue to flourish, enriching each other, or are they fundamentally at odds and in competition? This seminar will examine the major points of potential tension and synergy between science and Christianity, with the goal of open discussion and an eye on helping students develop their own ideas. We will consider themes such as evolution, extraterrestrial intelligence, consciousness, and particulars of the Christian faith.

Instructor(s): D. Abbot, D. Fabrycky, L. Schweitz. Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): RLST 27801

**BPRO 27900. Climate Change in Media and Design. 100 Units.**

If meteorological data and models show us that climate change is real, art and literature explore what it means for our collective human life. This is the premise of many recent films, novels, and artworks that ask how a changing climate will affect human society. In this course, we will examine the aesthetics of climate change across media, in order to understand how narrative, image, and even sound help us witness a planetary disaster that is often imperceptible. Rather than merely analyzing or theorizing various futures, this course will prepare students in hands-on methods of "speculative design" and "critical making." Each Tuesday, we will study how art and literature draw on the specific capacities of written and visual media to represent climate impacts, and how new humanities research is addressing climate change. Each Thursday, we will participate in short artistic exercises that explore futures of each area. These exercises include future object design, bodymapping and story circles, tabletop gameplay, and serious game design. Throughout the quarter, guest speakers from across the humanities, sciences, and social sciences will visit the class to speak about how their disciplines are working to understand and mitigate climate impacts. The most substantial work of the quarter will be an ambitious multimedia or transmedia project about one of the core course topics to be completed in a team.

Instructor(s): P. Jagoda, B. Morgan Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): CEGU 27900, MADD 21900, CMST 27814, ENGL 27904

**BPRO 28000. Terror, Religion, and Aesthetics. 100 Units.**

Through our contemporary experiences of terrorist acts, we apprehend the no-citizens' land of life without a social contract, of the violent "state of nature" among people. In varied genres (e.g., poems, plays, novels, memoirs, essays), we engage with the transformative powers of diverse aesthetics (e.g., catharsis, the sublime, theatre of cruelty, realism, fable, satire) and of religious faiths (e.g., deism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Sufism, Buddhism) to counteract terror and redeploy our civil status in society.

Instructor(s): Margot Browning, Staff Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): HMRT 28801, RLST 23401

**BPRO 28100. What is Enlightenment? 100 Units.**

What is enlightenment? How does one become enlightened, and who is enlightened? In Euro-American civilization, the eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment championed the powers of human reason against religion and superstition to achieve scientific progress. Buddhism in the nineteenth century was represented by the heirs of Enlightenment as a religion for the Enlightenment to the point of not being a religion at all. Both traditions offer pathways to freedom (or liberation?) that draw on our rational capabilities, and both sponsor the production of knowledge that re-visions our place in the world. But they seem to be opposed: how could reason reject "religious" beliefs but also take part in "religious" traditions that aim to bring certain kinds of persons into

being? We compare the mental models, discourses, methods of analysis, world-images, and practices of these traditions of enlightenment to assess the kinds of disciplines that their theoreticians and practitioners acquire and use.

Instructor(s): Margot Browning, Staff Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): HUMA 28109, RLST 23403, SALC 27601

**BPRO 28200. Narrating Migration. 100 Units.**

Human migration is one of the most pressing global problems of our time, though it is not a new phenomenon. It has shaped societies throughout time, and the degree to which it is perceived as a "problem" or an "opportunity" changes radically according to circumstances and ideologies. In this course, we will analyze the different ways in which migration has been perceived, understood, and experienced. We will focus on two intense episodes in the global history of migration: migration from early nineteenth-century Britain; and migration to late 20th and 21st-century America. Our emphasis throughout will be on the ways in which migration is narrated: the stories that societies tell about the migration of themselves and others. We will cover a wide range of migration narratives, including those of creative writers and artists, and will consider them through the lenses of literary criticism, history, theory, and also artistic practice itself.

Instructor(s): J. McDonagh, V. Tran Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 28200

**BPRO 28400. Thinking Psychoanalytically: From the Sciences to the Arts. 100 Units.**

Since Freud's seminal investigation into the nature of the mind, psychoanalytic thinking has offered a unique approach to unconscious, relational, and meaningful dimensions of human experience. Despite assaults on the field from numerous quarters, psychoanalytic thinking remains central to the work of practitioners across an array of disciplines. After an introduction to key psychoanalytic concepts including the unconscious, repression, and transference, we will investigate some of the ways in which these ideas are mobilized within clinical practice, neuroscience, anthropology, education, philosophy, literary studies, and the visual arts through a series of lectures presented by specialists from these fields. Along the way, we will gain an appreciation for some of the ways in which psychoanalytic perspectives continue to inspire a variety of current scientific and humanistic projects.

Instructor(s): A. Beal, Staff Terms Offered: May be offered in 2027-2028

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third or fourth-year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 24316

**BPRO 28500. Sex and Ethics. 100 Units.**

Sex is a big problem. How do we think about sex in proximity to considering the ethics of risk, harm, and the potential for good? Developing an account specifically of an ethics of sex requires thinking about the place of sex and sexual vulnerability in social life with an eye toward understanding what's good and what might count as abuses, violations, disruptions, or deprivations of specifically good things about sex. In popular discussion, for example, "consent" often demarcates ethically good sex from bad sex. This course inquires whether consent is an adequate metric for sexual ethics; if it is necessary or sufficient; if certain factors (e.g., age, gender, violence) vitiate its normative force; and whether its legal definition conflicts, coheres with, or contributes to its general cultural reception. These issues require us to think about the ways people do, do not, and cannot know what they're doing in sex, and complicate the aspiration to have an ethics in proximity to sex. This year's version of the course focuses on political theory/policy/popular scandal in relation to aesthetics and sex theory archives. We talk about sex in proximity to modes of comportment in love, scandal, prostitution, stranger intimacy, political freedom and discipline, impersonality, and experimentality.

Instructor(s): the late Lauren Berlant Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 28500, GNSE 28502, PLSC 21901

**BPRO 28700. Alternate Reality Games: Theory and Production. 100 Units.**

Games are one of the most prominent and influential media of our time. This experimental course explores the emerging genre of "alternate reality" or "transmedia" gaming. Throughout the quarter, we will approach new media theory through the history, aesthetics, and design of transmedia games. 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 video games, and the team dynamics of sports. Beyond the subject matter, students will design modules of an Alternate Reality Game in small groups. Students need not have a background in media or technology, but a wide-ranging imagination, interest in new media culture, or arts practice will make for a more exciting quarter.

Instructor(s): Patrick Jagoda, Heidi Coleman Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing. Instructor consent required. To apply, submit writing through online form: <https://forms.gle/QvRCKN6MjBtcteWy5>; see course description. Once given consent, attendance on the first day is mandatory. Questions: mb31@uchicago.edu

Equivalent Course(s): TAPS 28466, CMST 25954, ARTV 30700, CMST 35954, ENGL 25970, ARTV 20700, MADD 20700, ENGL 32314

**BPRO 28800. From Fossils to Fermi's Paradox: Origin and Evolution of Intelligent Life. 100 Units.**

The course approaches Fermi's question, "Are we alone in the universe?," in the light of recent evidence primarily from three fields: the history and evolution of life on Earth (paleontology), the meaning and evolution of complex signaling and intelligence (cognitive science), and the distribution, composition and conditions on planets and exoplanets (astronomy). We also review the history and parameters governing extrasolar detection and signaling. The aim of the course is to assess the interplay between convergence and contingency in evolution, the selective advantage of intelligence, and the existence and nature of life elsewhere in the universe - in order to better understand the meaning of human existence.

Instructor(s): P. Sereno; L. Rogers; S. London Terms Offered: May be offered in 2027-2028

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third or fourth-year standing. This course does not meet the requirements of the Biological Sciences major. Prerequisite(s) for BIOS 13142 only: BIOS 10130 or BIOS 10140. For BIOS 13142: NO BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES MAJORS OR NON-BIOLOGY PRE-MED STUDENTS, except by petition.

Equivalent Course(s): BIOS 13142, PSYC 28810

**BPRO 28900. Inequality: Origins, Dimensions, and Policy. 100 Units.**

For the last four decades, incomes in the United States and across the globe have grown more unequal. That fact has attracted worldwide attention from scholars, governments, religious figures, and public intellectuals. In this interdisciplinary course, participating faculty members drawn from across the University and invited guest speakers will trace and examine the sources and challenges of inequality and mobility in many of its dimensions, from economic, political, legal, biological, philosophical, public policy, and other perspectives. This course is part of the College Course Cluster program: Inequality.

Instructor(s): the late Allen Sanderson and Staff Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): PBPL 28920, ECON 24720

**BPRO 29000. Energy and Energy Policy. 100 Units.**

This course shows how scientific constraints affect economic and other policy decisions regarding energy, what energy-based issues confront our society, how we may address them through both policy and scientific study, and how the policy and scientific aspects can and should interact. We address specific technologies, both those now in use and those under development, and the policy questions associated with each, as well as with more overarching aspects of energy policy that may affect several, perhaps many, technologies.

Instructor(s): Taught by the late Stephen Berry and the late George Tolley Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing. For ECON majors who want ECON credit for this course

(ECON 26800): PQ is ECON 20100.

Equivalent Course(s): PSMS 39000, ECON 26800, PPHA 39201, CHSS 37502, PBPL 29000

**BPRO 29200. Global Energy & Climate Challenge: Economics, Science & Policy. 100 Units.**

The global energy and climate challenge is one of the most important and urgent problems society faces. Progress requires identifying approaches to ensure people have access to the inexpensive and reliable energy critical for human development, without causing disruptive climate change or unduly compromising health and the environment. The course pairs technical and economic analysis to develop an understanding of policy challenges in this area. Lecture topics will include the past, present, and future of energy supply and demand, global climate change, air pollution and its health consequences, selected energy technologies such as solar photovoltaics, nuclear power, unconventional oil and gas, and an analysis of theoretical and practical policy solutions in developed and emerging economies.

Instructor(s): M. Greenstone, J. Deutch Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing in the College.

Equivalent Course(s): PPHA 39905, ECON 26730, PBPL 29200

**BPRO 29520. Sustainability and Computing. 100 Units.**

Once a darling of the economy, the computing industry has come under fire as "techlash" brings a spotlight to its negative environmental and societal impacts. We focus on understanding computing's environmental impact, and the productive and substantial (not greenwashing) actions that can be taken to reduce it. The objective of this course is to expose students to a sophisticated view of how computing affects the environment, and how it can become more sustainable through action in several dimensions, including technology invention and design, business/ecosystem structure, individual and government action. Students will be empowered with the intellectual tools to understand and act with insight on these issues in their professional careers.

Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Prerequisite(s): Students must be in their third or fourth year of study.

Equivalent Course(s): CMSC 29520, CEGU 29520, CMSC 39520

**BPRO 29943. Diasporic Narratives and Memories. 100 Units.**

Of the many emigrant communities in Chicago, Belarusians are the only group that does not yet have its own museum. Our course takes this lack as an opportunity to provide training for students to create a grassroots community-driven initiative that empirically develops a conceptual foundation for a new type of multi-ethnic museum of emigration, one informed by the experiences of community members themselves and their relationship to the artifacts that define their identities and memories. This course allows students to actively participate in a museum creation project which takes as its point of departure not a nation-state narrative, but the

everyday life of a multi-ethnic community with the goal of informing research, policy, and public discourse about emigration. We center our course around the material heritage of Belarussia and its dispersal in emigration. We analyze how a diasporic museum's main role is to collect, protect and curate the material legacy of the Belarussian community to ensure its future stability. The course participants collaborate with the Chicago Studies Program, the NGO Belarussians in Chicago, and the Chicago History Museum to study the role of artifacts in museums. The students conduct the field work about multi-ethnic Belarussian emigration to include experiences of Belarussian Jews, Belarussian Russians, Belarussian Lithuanians, Belarussian Tatars, and other groups from Belarus.

Instructor(s): Olga Solovieva and Bozena Shallcross Terms Offered: Not offered in 2026-2027

Equivalent Course(s): CHST 29943, CMLT 29943, HIIPS 26943, REES 29950, MAPH 39943, KNOW 29943

