

Fundamentals: Issues and Texts

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Program of Study

The Fundamentals program is designed to enable interested students to concentrate on certain fundamental questions of human existence and certain fundamental books that articulate and speak to these questions. It seeks to foster precise and thoughtful pursuit of basic questions by means of (1) rigorous training in the interpretation of important texts, supported by (2) extensive training in at least one foreign language, and by (3) the acquisition of the knowledge, approaches, and skills of conventional disciplines: historical, religious, literary, scientific, political, and philosophical. By focusing on basic issues and texts, it offers an alternative to the more disciplinary and methodological emphases of other undergraduate programs.

Rationale. There are fundamental *questions* that any thoughtful human being must seriously confront sooner or later, for example, Socrates' "What is?" questions: What is man? What is god? What is justice? or, alternatively but similarly, Kant's questions: What can I know? What ought I do? What may I hope? Such questions and others like them are often raised in the general education courses, not only in humanities and social sciences but also in the physical and biological sciences. Some students, engaged by such fundamental questions, wish to continue to explore them more thoroughly and deeply. This program enables these students to concentrate on basic questions and seeks to provide them with the wherewithal to address them on a high level.

That wherewithal is to be found in the fundamental or classic *texts* (literary, philosophic, religious, historical, and scientific) in which the greatest minds and teachers articulate and examine the basic questions, often in different and competing ways. These books are both timeless and timely; they not only illuminate the persisting questions of human existence but also speak to our contemporary concerns, especially as they are both the originators and the most exacting critics of our current opinions. Accordingly, these texts serve best not as authorities but as friends who present us with rich alternatives at the highest level and hence with the most provocative material for reflection.

This program emphasizes the direct and firsthand experience and knowledge of major texts, read and reread and reread again. Because they are difficult and complex, only a small number of such works can be studied. Yet the program assumes that intensively studying a profound work and incorporating it into one's thought and imagination prepares one for reading any important book or reflecting on any important question. Read rapidly, such books are merely assimilated into preexisting experience and opinions; read intensively, they can transform and deepen experience and thought.

But studying fundamental texts is, by itself, not enough. Even to understand the texts themselves, *supporting studies and training* are necessary: a solid foundation in at least one foreign language and in disciplines and subject matters pertinent to the student's main questions are essential parts of the concentration program. Knowledge of the historical contexts out of which certain problems emerged or in which authors wrote; knowledge of specific subject matters and methods; knowledge of the language in which a text was originally written, as well as an understanding of the shape a given language imparts to a given author or language as such to thought as such; fundamental skills of analysis, gathering evidence, reasoning, and criticism; different approaches and perspectives of conventional disciplines. All these are integral parts of the educational task.

Individual Program Design. Genuine questions cannot be given to a student; they must arise from within. For this reason, a set curriculum is not imposed upon the student. It must answer to his interests and concerns, and begin from what is primary for him. One student may be exercised about questions of war and peace, another about the nature of man, a third about science and religion, a fourth about freedom and determinism, a fifth about distributive justice. Through close work with a suitably chosen faculty adviser, the choice of texts, text courses, and supporting courses for each student is worked out in relation to such beginning and developing concerns. Beginning with a student's questions and interests does not, however, imply an absence of standards or rigor; this program is most demanding.

Application to the Program. Students should apply in the Spring Quarter of their first year to enter the program in their second year; the goals and requirements of the program are best met if students spend three years in the concentration. Applications may, however, be made during the second year as well. Each student is interviewed and counseled in order to discover those students whose interests and intellectual commitments would seem to be best served by this program. Students are admitted on the basis of the application statement, interviews, and previous performance.

Program Requirements

A. Course Requirements.

1. *Required Introductory Sequence (2).* A two-quarter sequence, open to second- and third-year students, serves as the introduction to the concentration. It sets a standard and a tone for the program as a whole by showing how texts can be read to illuminate fundamental questions. Each course in the sequence is taught by a different faculty member; each course is devoted to the close reading of one or at most two texts, chosen because they illuminate the great questions and powerfully present important and competing answers, and because they might contain the truth about, for example, nature, the soul, community, art, or the best way to live. Students should learn a variety of ways in which a text can respond to their concerns and questions and can compel consideration of its own questions and concerns.
2. *Elected Text Courses (6).* The central activity of the concentration is the study and learning of *six* classic texts. Late in the second year,

each student, with the help of a faculty adviser, begins to develop a list of six texts. The list grows gradually during the following year; a final list of six should be established early in the fourth year. This list should contain fundamental works in the area of the student's primary interest, but should include works which look at that interest from diverse perspectives. The texts selected are usually studied in seminar courses offered by the faculty of the program or in courses cross listed or approved for these purposes. Some books may, however, be prepared in reading courses or tutorials (independent study), if appropriate. Students write term papers in each of their text courses. These are carefully and thoroughly criticized by the responsible faculty members. The books taught come from a variety of times and places, East and West, and the selections reflect both the judgments and preferences of the faculty and the different interests and concerns of the students. Normally, six text courses are required for the degree (in addition to the introductory sequence). At the end of the fourth year, students take a Fundamentals examination on the books they have selected (consult following section on Fundamentals Examination).

3. *Foreign Language (6)*. Each student in the program is expected to achieve a level of competence in a foreign language sufficient to enable him to study in the original language (other than English) one of the texts on his examination list. Achieving the necessary competence ordinarily requires two years (i.e., one year beyond the College language requirement) of formal language instruction (with an average grade of *B-* or better) or its equivalent. In addition, each student must show that he has in fact used foreign language skills in studying one of the fundamental texts. In some cases, a student who has successfully completed at least one year of formal language instruction may arrange to study his chosen text in a tutorial or reading course with a member of the faculty, thereby concurrently developing further his language competence, and may petition to have such work count toward the fulfillment of the foreign language requirement.
4. *Elected Supporting Courses (4)*. Appropriate courses in relevant disciplines and subject matters are selected with the help of the advisers.
5. *Electives*. Please refer to the Four-Year Curriculum section, under the Sample Programs heading (consult following section on Sample Programs).

B. The Junior Paper. The junior paper occupies a unique and highly important place in the program because it provides the only opportunity for the student to *originate and formulate* a serious inquiry into an important issue arising out of his work and to pursue the inquiry extensively and in depth in a paper of about twenty to twenty-five pages. At every stage in the preparation of the paper, the student is expected to work closely with his faculty adviser. Normally, students elect to register for one course of independent study in the quarter in which they write and rewrite the paper. Acceptance of a successful junior paper is a prerequisite for admission to the senior year of the program.

C. Fundamentals Examination. Sometime in the Spring Quarter of the senior year, each student is examined on the six fundamental texts he has chosen. Preparation for this examination allows students to review and integrate their full course of study. During a three-day period, students write two substantial essays on questions designed for them by the associated faculty. The examination has a pedagogical intention, more than a qualifying one. Its purpose is to allow students to demonstrate how they have related and integrated their questions, texts, and disciplinary studies.

Summary of Requirements

College Language Requirement		<i>demonstrated competence in a foreign language equivalent to one year of college-level study</i>
Concentration	3	courses in a second-year foreign language†
	2	introductory courses
	6	elected text courses
	4	elected supporting courses
	–	junior paper
	–	Fundamentals examination
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† *Credit may be granted by examination.*

Grading, Transcripts, and Recommendations. The independent study leading to the junior paper (NCDV 29900) is best evaluated in faculty statements on the nature and the quality of the work. In support of the independent study grade of *Pass*, both the faculty supervisor and the second reader of the paper are asked to submit such statements to student files maintained in the Office of the New Collegiate Division. Other independent study courses may be taken on a *Pass/No Pass* basis (NCDV 29900) or for a "quality grade" (NCDV 29700); students must write a term paper for any independent study courses taken for a "quality grade." Students should request statements of reference from faculty with whom they have worked in all their independent study courses.

At the student's request, the registrar can include the following statement with each transcript:

The New Collegiate Division works with a small, selected group of students. There is less emphasis on letter grades than in other Collegiate Divisions and greater emphasis on independent work (NCDV 29900), including substantial papers submitted at the end of the junior and senior years. Students do some substantial portion of their work in close association with a tutor or tutors, and this work is graded *Pass/No Pass* only. Grades are supplemented with qualitative statements available from the Master, New Collegiate Division, The University of Chicago, 5811 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

Honors. Honors are awarded by the Fundamentals faculty to students who have performed with distinction in the program. Special attention is paid to both the junior paper and the senior examination. In addition, honors depend

on the student's grades, especially in the concentration; a 3.25 GPA is roughly the floor, but because some course work may be ungraded, the GPA standard cannot be stated precisely.

Advising. Each student has his own faculty adviser, a member in the program chosen from those with whom the student works most closely. The adviser closely monitors the student's choice of texts, courses, and language studies, allowing for the gradual development of a fitting and coherent program. The faculty adviser supervises and is one of the readers of the junior paper and is responsible for approving the final list of texts for the Fundamentals examination. The program coordinator is available for advice and consultation on all aspects of every student's program.

Sample Programs. The following sample programs show, first, a plan of a four-year curriculum, locating the concentration in the context of Collegiate requirements, and, second, illustrative courses of study *within* the concentration itself, indicating possible ways of connecting fundamental questions and interests to both basic texts and standard courses. *These programs are merely for the purpose of illustration; many, many other variations would be possible.*

Four-Year Sample Curriculum. Courses that meet College general education requirements are labeled (GE). Courses that are underlined fulfill requirements of the Fundamentals concentration. The Fundamentals concentration program comprises fifteen courses, over and above the fifteen courses constituting the College-wide general education requirement. Yet of these fifteen concentration courses, only five are true requirements, that is, fixed courses that must be taken and, usually, at a prescribed time: the two-quarter introductory sequence is strictly required and prescribed for the student's first year in the program and, in most cases, a second year of foreign language study (in the language of one's choice) is also prescribed. All the remaining ten courses (text and supporting courses) are truly elective, and are freely chosen by the student with advice from his faculty adviser. A student interested in Fundamentals is well advised to take Humanities and a language in the first year.

First year	Humanities (GE)	3
	Social Sciences (GE)	3
	Physical Sciences or Biological Sciences or Mathematics (GE)	3
	Foreign Language I	<u>3</u>
	Subtotal	12
Second year	<u>Introductory Fundamentals Sequence</u>	2
	Physical Sciences or Biological Sciences or Mathematics (GE)	3
	<u>Foreign Language II</u>	3
	Civilization Sequence (GE)	3
	Text Course	<u>1</u>
	Subtotal	12

<i>Third year</i>	<u>Text Courses</u>	3
	<u>Supporting Courses</u>	2
	Musical, Visual, or Dramatic Arts (GE)	1
	Electives*	<u>3</u>
	Subtotal	9
<i>Fourth year</i>	<u>Text Courses</u>	2
	<u>Supporting Courses</u>	2
	Electives*	<u>5</u>
	Subtotal	9
	Total	42

* Normally students take one unit of independent study to write the junior paper and another to prepare for the Fundamentals examination.

Questions, Texts, and Supporting Courses. All Fundamentals students, working with their advisers, develop their own program of study. Since students come to Fundamentals with diverse questions, they naturally have diverse programs. The following programs completed by Fundamentals students may serve as examples of study in the concentration.

One student asked the question, "How does telling a story shape a life?" She studied Homer's *Odyssey*, Augustine's *Confessions*, Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, Goethe's *Autobiography*, Saint Teresa's *Life*, and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and studied in supporting courses, Reading and Writing Poetry (Fundamentals), Myth and Literature (German), Autobiography and Confession (Divinity School), and Comparative Approaches to Psychotherapy (Psychology).

A second student asked a question about the ethics of violence, "Is there a just war?" He read Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*, Aristotle's *Ethics*, the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel of Matthew, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and Weber's "Politics as a Vocation," and studied in supporting courses World War II (History), The Military and Militarism (Sociology), Introduction to Indian Philosophical Thought (South Asian Languages and Civilizations), and Introduction to the New Testament (Early Christian Literature).

A third Fundamentals student investigated the question, "Is the family a natural or a cultural institution?" His texts were Genesis, Homer's *Odyssey*, Aristotle's *Politics*, Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Sophocles' *Antigone*, and Rousseau's *Emile*. In supporting courses, he studied The Family (Sociology), Men and Women: A Literary Perspective (Fundamentals), Political Philosophy of Locke (Political Science), and Sophocles (Greek).

A fourth student, interested in natural right and natural law, read Genesis, Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Ethics*, Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, and the *Federalist Papers*. In supporting courses, he studied Machiavelli to Locke, Rousseau to Weber, and the Political Philosophy of Plato (all Political Science).

A fifth asked the question, "What is marriage?" and concentrated on these texts: Genesis, Homer's *Odyssey*, Sophocles' *Antigone*, Shakespeare's *Antony*

and *Cleopatra*, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, and took, as supporting courses, Contemporary Ethical Theory (Philosophy), History of American Women (History), The Family (Sociology), and Sex Roles and Society (Psychology).

These programs indicate the diversity of issues and books Fundamentals represents. They are intended to suggest the cohesion of the individual program's texts and supporting courses within the context of a broad question. Obviously, many, many other programs could be devised.

Activities of Graduates. The Fundamentals program serves the purposes of liberal education, regarded as an end in itself, and offers no specific pre-professional training. Yet Fundamentals graduates have successfully prepared for careers in the professions and in scholarship. Some are now pursuing work in law, medicine, journalism, ministry, government service, business, veterinary medicine, and secondary school teaching. Others have gone on to graduate schools in numerous fields, including classics, English, comparative literature, Slavic, history, philosophy, social thought, theology, religious studies, clinical psychology, political science, development economics, mathematics, film studies, and education.

Faculty

The faculty of the Fundamentals program comprises humanists and social scientists, representing interests and competencies in both the East and the West and scholarship in matters ancient and modern. This diversity and pluralism exists within a common agreement about the primacy of fundamental questions and the centrality of important books and reading them well. The intention is for the students to see a variety of serious men and women presenting their approach to and understanding of books which they love, which they know well, and which are central to their ongoing concerns. The members of the Fundamentals faculty are

E. Asmis, B. Cohler, W. Doniger, C. Gray, D. Grene, A. Kass, L. Kass, M. Lilla, J. MacAloon, S. Meredith, W. Olmsted, J. Redfield, W. Schweiker, J. Z. Smith, N. Tarcov, C. von Nolcken, K. Weintraub

Courses

Courses preceded by an asterisk () will be part of the required introductory sequence in 2002-03.*

***20800. Faust.** *Required of new concentrators.* This course examines two portrayals of the Faust legend: one by Goethe and the other by Christopher Marlowe. Class discussion focuses on the following issues: the origins of evil, the meaning of sin and moral responsibility, and the relationship between modernity and morality in a seemingly post-theistic world. *S. Meredith. Winter, 2003.*

20901. The Poetry and Prose of W. H. Auden. The course is devoted to a close reading of selected poems and essays by W. H. Auden. *M. Lilla, M. Strand. Spring, 2003.*

21000. Religion, Power, and Desire in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*, and *The Winter's Tale*. (=HUMA 22500, RLST 26500) This course studies the plays in the context of contemporary conflicts over the relation of ecclesiastical and secular power to passion, desire, and pleasure. We address issues of gender, status, tyranny, conscience, and explore the possibilities of speaking truth to power. We study the implications of theatrical representation for understanding the exercise of power in domestic and colonial contexts. *W. Olmsted. Winter, 2003.*

21300. James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Among the themes considered are the problems of exile, homelessness, and nationality; the mysteries of paternity; the mystery of maternity; the meaning of the Return; Joyce's epistemology and his use of dream, fantasy, and hallucination; and Joyce's experimentation and use of language. *S. Meredith. Spring, 2003.*

21500. Kant: Ethics, Politics, History, Religion. (=HUMA 25000, IMET 31500, LLSO 22800) For course description, see Law, Letters, and Society. *D. Smigelskis. Spring, 2003.*

21900. Milton's *Paradise Lost*. (=GNDR 21600, HUMA 20800, RLST 26400) We read *Paradise Lost* closely, attending to its redefinition of the heroics not only of war but of marriage and friendship. We study the text's engagement with issues of family, politics, history, psychology, and theology. *W. Olmsted. Autumn, 2002.*

22300. Myths and Symbols of Evil. (=HUMA 21200, RELH 22300, RLST 23600) This course examines in depth Martin Buber's *Good and Evil* and Paul Ricoeur's *Symbolism of Evil*. There are a few brief lectures, but emphasis is on seminar discussion and student participation. *A. Carr. Winter, 2003.*

22501. Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*. (=PHIL 34400, SCTH 34400) *PQ: Consent of instructor.* For course description, see Philosophy. *J. Lear, J. Conant. Autumn, 2002.*

22502. Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. (=SCTH 34900) *PQ: Consent of instructor via jlear@uchicago.edu in preceding Spring Quarter and prior reading of entire work in Summer Quarter. Enrollment limited.* A close reading of Dostoyevsky's classic. *J. Lear, J. Coetzee. Autumn, 2002.*

22800. *War and Peace*. (=RUSS 23600/33600) For course description, see Slavic Languages and Literatures (Russian). *E. Wasiolek. Autumn, 2002.*

23000. Narration and Knowledge. (=BPRO 26000) *PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing.* Narrative is one of the most fundamental means of organizing human experience, whether collective, individual, fictional, or historical. This course explores the meaning of narrative organization of materials in a variety of discourses, ranging from case histories to narrative poems. It explores the powers of narrative and also considers the question of whether narrative organization sometimes serves to distort the underlying material involved. The mode of the course is exploratory and analytic, rather than dogmatic. *R. Strier, B. Cohler. Spring, 2003.*

23601. Religion, Sex, Politics, and Release in Ancient India. (=DVHR 32100, RLST 27300, SALC 25701/35701, SOTH 35600) For course description, see Religious Studies. Texts in English. *W. Doniger. Autumn, 2002.*

23801. Mythical Thinking: Classics in the Study of Religion. (=RELH 23801, RLST 27800) For course description, see Religion and the Humanities. *J. Z. Smith. Autumn, 2002.*

23802. Thinking with Stories. (=RELH 23802, RLST 27900) For course description, see Religion and the Humanities. *J. Z. Smith. Spring, 2003.*

24101. Averroes: *Decisive Treatise*. (=SCTH 34100) *PQ: Consent of instructor. Reading knowledge of classical Arabic desirable, but not required.* A close study of Averroes' thought as expressed in this judicial ruling. *R. Lerner, J. Kraemer. Autumn, 2002.*

24600. The Radicalism of *Job* and *Ecclesiastes*. (=HUMA 23500, JWSC 23500, NCDV 27700) For course description, see Jewish Studies. Texts in English. *H. Moltz. Spring, 2003.*

25000. Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*. (=GRMN 25300) After an initial survey of the Faust-tradition in European literature, we focus our attention on Mann's masterpiece written in the immediate aftermath of World War II. At the center of our discussions is Mann's attempt to link the crisis of aesthetic aspirations in modernity to a cultural history of Germany, culminating in the rise of Nazism. *Optional German discussion sessions offered.* *E. Santner. Autumn, 2002.*

25300. *Lolita*. (=GSHU 25000, RUSS 23900) For course description, see Slavic Languages and Literatures (Russian). *M. Sternstein. Winter, 2003.*

25700. Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales*. (=ENGL 20105) *PQ: Enrollment in Study Abroad Program. Prior knowledge of Middle English not required.* For course description, see English Language and Literature. *C. von Nolcken. Autumn.*

***26000. Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*.** *PQ: Required of new concentrators.* These two major Platonic dialogues explore love, philosophy, and rhetoric in two very different dramatic contexts: the dialectical conversation and the symposium. We read each dialogue closely, paying attention to the arguments of each and to the way each adjudicates between conflicting accounts of erotic love. *W. Olmsted. Autumn, 2002.*

26100. *Les Misérables*. (=RLLT 26100/36100) *PQ: FREN 20300 or consent of instructor.* For course description, see Romance Languages and Literatures (French). Written work in French or English. *R. Morrissey. Winter, 2003.*

26101. Machiavelli's *Discourses*. (=HIST 22801/32801) This course focuses on Machiavelli's political and historical thought and on the interpretation of ancient and modern history he articulated in the *Discourses*, with attention also to some of the sources, such as works of Livy and Polybius, on which he drew. *H. Gray. Winter, 2003.*

27200. Dante I: *The Divine Comedy (Inferno)*. (=GSHU 21400/31400, ITAL 21900/31900) For course description, see Romance Languages and Literatures (Italian). Classes conducted in English. Students with linguistic competence read the poem in Italian. *R. West. Autumn, 2002.*

27201. Dante II: *The Divine Comedy (Purgatorio and Paradiso)*. (=GSHU 23000/33000, ITAL 22000/32000) For course description, see Italian. Classes conducted in English. Students with competence in Italian read in Italian. *Optional Italian discussion sessions offered. R. West. Winter, 2003.*

28100. Beowulf. (=ENGL 15200/35200) *PQ: ENGL 14900/34900 or equivalent.* For course description, see English Language and Literature. *C. von Nolcken. Winter, 2003.*

28201. Violence and the Sacred. Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* and O'Connor's *Wise Blood* are texts that explore boundary situations of violence to illuminate religious realities. *B. Brown. Autumn, 2002.*

28600. Short Fiction of Thomas Mann. *M. Strand. Winter, 2003.*

29200. Political Philosophy: Rousseau. (=LLSO 21500, PLSC 31500) For course description, see Political Science. *J. Cropsey. Winter, 2003.*

29400. Zola and Dostoevsky on Crime and Retribution. (=HUMA 24600) This course consists of close reading and discussion of two European classics written independently from each other on similar themes: Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* (1868) and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866). Both are, in a sense, precursors of the detective novel, except that the criminals rather than the detectives are the protagonists. Both are examples of extreme positions taken on transgression: Zola represents a materialistic, "scientific" view and Dostoevsky a spiritual, Christian view of human behavior. Thus, both represent fundamental texts in expressing these fundamentally opposed points of view. *P. Dembowski. Spring, 2003.*

32100. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. (=CLCV 32100, NTEC 42100) For course description, see Classical Studies (Classical Civilization). *E. Asmis. Winter, 2003.*