

# Fundamentals: Issues and Texts

*Program Chair: Wendy Olmsted, HM W601, 702-8593*

*Program Coordinator: Dan Silver, C 327, 702-7144, dsilver@uchicago.edu*

*Departmental Secretary: Delores A. Jackson, C 330, 702-7148,*

*djackson@midway.uchicago.edu*

## Program of Study

The Fundamentals program enables students to concentrate on fundamental questions by reading classic texts 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.

**Rationale.** A richly informed question or concern formulated by students guides the reading of texts. Classic texts are also informed by such questions, for example, Socrates asks: What is virtue? What is the good? What is justice? Aristotle and Cicero explore the relation of civic friendship to society. Freud asks: what is happiness? Can humans be happy? Milton investigates how poetic vocation may be related to political responsibility. Questions of this nature 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. Students who are engaged by these questions, who find them both basic and urgent, may wish to continue to explore them more thoroughly and deeply within the structure of the program which provides 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 great writers articulate and examine questions in different and competing ways. These books illuminate the persisting questions and speak to contemporary concerns because they are both the originators and the most exacting critics of our current opinions. Accordingly, these texts serve best not as authorities but as colleagues who challenge us to think that “something else might actually be the case” than what we already think. The most important questions may, at bottom, be the most contested, and those most susceptible to, and most requiring, sustained, probing engagement.

This program emphasizes the 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 issue. 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 main questions of students are essential parts of the major. 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; 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 students. It must answer to their interests and concerns, and begin from what is primary for them. One student may be exercised about questions of science and religion, another about freedom and determinism, another about friendship and conversation, another by prudence, romance, and marriage, a fifth about distributive justice. Through close work with a suitably chosen faculty adviser, the choice of texts, text or author 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 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 major. Students are interviewed and counseled in order to discover whether or not their interests and intellectual commitments would 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 major. 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 two texts, chosen because they raise challenging questions

and present important and competing answers. Students should learn a variety of ways in which a text can respond to their concerns and can compel consideration of its own questions.

2. *Elected Text and Author Courses (6)*. The central activity of the program 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 their fourth year. This list should contain works in the area of the student's primary interest that 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 or author 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. Typically, six text or author courses are required for the degree (in addition to the introductory sequence). At the end of their fourth year, students take a Fundamentals examination on the books they have selected (consult following section on Fundamentals Examination).
  3. *Foreign Language (3)*. Students in the program are expected to achieve a level of competence in a foreign language sufficient to enable them to study in the original language (other than English) one of the texts on their examination list. Achieving the necessary competence ordinarily requires two years of formal language instruction (with an average grade of *B-* or better) or its equivalent. The second year of the language may be counted toward the major. In addition, students must demonstrate their language abilities by taking a course or independent study in which one of their texts is read in the original language, or by writing a paper that analyzes the text in its original language and shows the student's comprehension of that language.
  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 provides the opportunity for students to *originate and formulate* a serious inquiry into an important issue arising out of their 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, students are expected to work closely with their faculty adviser. Typically, 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 Spring Quarter of their senior year, students are examined on the six fundamental texts they have 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

3	courses in a second-year foreign language*
2	introductory courses
6	elected text or author courses
4	elected supporting courses
–	junior paper
–	Fundamentals examination
<hr/> 15	

*\*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 *P/F* 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/Fail* 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.

**Advising.** Students have faculty advisers who are chosen from members of the program 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 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 Fundamentals program in the context of Collegiate requirements, and, second, illustrative courses of study *within* the major 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 major. The Fundamentals program is comprised of fifteen courses. Yet 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 students who are in the first year of the program and, in most cases, a second year of foreign language study (in a language chosen by the students) is also prescribed. All the remaining ten courses (text and supporting courses) are truly elective, and are freely chosen by students with advice from their faculty advisers. Students interested in Fundamentals are well advised to take Humanities and a language in the first year.

<i>First Year</i>	Humanities (GE)	3
	Social Sciences (GE)	3
	Physical Sciences or Biological Sciences or Mathematics (GE)	3
	Foreign Language I	<u>3</u>
	Subtotal	12
<i>Second Year</i>	<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
	<u>Text or Author Course</u>	<u>1</u>
	Subtotal	12

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

\* Typically students register for one independent study course 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. Because students come to Fundamentals with diverse questions, they naturally have diverse programs. Examples of programs completed by Fundamentals students are listed below.

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?” The texts studied were Genesis, Homer’s *Odyssey*, Aristotle’s *Politics*, Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, Sophocles’ *Antigone*, and Rousseau’s *Emile*. The supporting courses included 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, this student 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, M. L. Behnke, B. Cohler, W. Doniger, C. Fasolt, A. Kass, L. Kass, J. Lear, M. Lilla, J. MacAloon, S. Meredith, W. Olmsted, J. Redfield, W. Schweiker, J. Z. Smith, N. Tarcov, C. von Nolcken, D. Wray

**Courses: Fundamentals: Issues and Texts (FN DL)**

*Courses preceded by an asterisk (\*) will be part of the required introductory sequence in 2006-07.*

**20501. Thucydides.** This course is organized around a reading of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, along with selections from Xenophon's *Hellenica*. Particular attention is paid to the Sicilian Expedition and the oligarchic coups of 411 and 404. We attempt to use the background Thucydides' narrative of these events provides to discern the political aspirations of Socrates's circle of "students" and understand the level of "spin" involved in Plato's discussion of the democratic state. *P. Edwards. Spring.*

**20912. Rousseau's Confessions.** *M. Lilla. Autumn, 2008.*

**21201. Milton.** (=ENGL 17501) For course description, see English Language and Literature. *J. Scodel. Spring.*

**21300. James Joyce's Ulysses.** In this course we consider themes that include 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, 2007.*

**21403. Shakespeare I: Histories and Comedies.** (=ENGL 16500, ISHU 26550) For course description, see English Language and Literature. *D. Bevington. Winter.*

**21405. Tacitus on Liberty and Autocracy.** (=CLAS 37606, CLCV 27606) This course is structured around a close reading and discussion of Tacitus's *Annals* and *Agricola*, covering the history of the early Roman emperors. The focus of the discussion is on Tacitus' political thought regarding the relations between the emperor and senators through the transition from Republican liberty to imperial autocracy. *R. Saller. Spring, 2007.*

**21404. Shakespeare II. Tragedies and Romances.** (=ENGL 16600, ISHU 26560) *ISHU 26550 recommended but not required.* For course description, see English Language and Literature. *R. Strier. Spring.*

**21602. Men and Women in Literary Perspectives.** (=GNDR 21602, HUMA 27003) *PQ: Completion of the general education requirement for the humanities. Class limited to twenty students.* This seminar is devoted primarily to the close reading and discussion of Shakespeare's comedy, *As You Like It*, with special attention to issues of friendship, love, courtship, and marriage. Shorter literary readings, classic and contemporary, dealing with these themes are used to supplement the discussion of the play. *A. Kass. Spring, 2007.*



**21900. Milton's *Paradise Lost*.** (=GNDR 21600, HUMA 20800, IMET 31900, RLST 26400) *Class limited to twenty-five students.* This course focuses on a close reading of *Paradise Lost*, attending to its redefinition of the heroics not only of war but also of marriage and friendship. We study the text's engagement of issues of family, politics, history, psychology, and theology. *W. Olmsted. Winter, 2008.*

**21901. Homer's *Odyssey*.** (=CLCV 27300, HUMA 27505) This course covers the hero's journey home, the household as the primary social institution, hospitality, and guest-friendship. We study processes of initiation to explore ways the text draws boundaries between youths and adults, gods and men, and nature and culture. The role of the singer and the artistry of the oral poem are also important topics. Text in English. *W. Olmsted. Winter, 2007.*

**\*21902. *Hamlet and Macbeth*.** *Required of new majors; open to other students with consent of instructor.* The focus of this course is a close reading and discussion of the plays. Both plays engage audiences in discerning the relationship between fantasy and actuality, the supernatural and the psychological. We discuss the religious, psychological, and ethical questions that arise in the plays as a result of these ambiguities, and we study the political implications of these questions as well as their impact on the family, marriage, and friendship. *W. Olmsted. Autumn, 2006.*

**22200. Reinhold Niebuhr: Theology and Ethics.** This course examines Reinhold Niebuhr's systematical theology, especially his arguments for the Christian understanding of human existence and for the relation of the moral enterprise to the reality of God. *F. Gamwell. Autumn, 2006.*

**22402. Edmund Burke.** This course is a study of Edmund Burke on the revolutionary proceedings in America and France, with responses to him from the right and left. We do a close reading, with consideration of the relation between rhetoric and substance. *J. Redfield. Winter, 2007.*

**22501. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*.** (=PHIL 24101) For course description, see Philosophy. *J. Lear. Autumn, 2006.*

**22610. Socrates.** (=PHIL 26490) For course description, see Philosophy. *This class meets at the University of Chicago's Center in Paris. J. Lear. Spring, 2007.*

**22700. Literary Kierkegaard.** (=CMLT 24500, GRMN 25200) For course description, see Germanic Studies (German). *C. Tang. Autumn, 2006.*

**22910. Henry James: The Fiction of Crisis.** (=ENGL 22300) For course description, see English Language and Literature. *W. Veeder. Autumn.*

**23112. *The Autobiography of Teresa Avila*.** (=GNDR 20701, HIST 19801, RLST 20701) For course description, see Religious Studies. *L. Pick. Spring, 2007.*

**23312. Memory, Commemoration, and Mourning.** (=AASR 30001, BPRO 26050, HUDV 27102, PSYC 25450, RLST 28102) *PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing.* For course description, see Big Problems. *B. Cohler, P. Homans. Spring, 2007.*

**23400. Plato's Laws.** (=PLSC 23800/48300, SCTH 30300) *PQ: Consent of instructor. Enrollment limited.* For course description, see Political Science. *N. Tarcov. Spring.*

**24100. Ulysses.** (=ENGL 24000) For course description, see English Language and Literature. *L. Ruddick. Winter.*

**24211. Lucretius and Karl Marx.** (=ANST 25606, CLAS 35606, CLCV 25606, CMLT 27900/37900) For course description, see Classical Studies (Classical Civilization). *E. Asmis. Autumn, 2006.*

**24310. Augustine, Confessions.** (=LATN 23500/33500) For course description, see Classical Studies (Latin). *P. White. Spring, 2007.*

**24313. Seminar: Vergil's Aeneid.** (=CLCV 29400) *PQ: Second-year standing or higher. Prior reading of Book 1. Class limited to fifteen students.* For course description, see Classical Studies (Classical Civilization). *M. L. Behnke. Spring, 2007.*

**24411. Lincoln: Slavery, War, and the Constitution.** (=HIST 27012, LLSO 24711) *PQ: Consent of instructor. Class limited to twenty-five students.* For course description, see Law, Letters, and Society. *D. Hutchinson. Winter.*

**24511. Shakespeare's Twelfth Night.** This course offers a close reading of the text, exploring such issues as comedy, romance, disguise, gender, and (erotic) love. *C. Faraone, W. Olmsted, J. Redfield. Winter.*

**25300. Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita.** (=ISHU 24901, RUSS 23900) For course description, see Slavic Languages and Literatures (Russian). *M. Sternstein. Winter, 2007.*

**25400. The Russian Law Code (Ulozhenie) of 1649.** (=HIST 23600/33600, LLSO 25400, SOSC 26400) For course description, see History. *R. Hellie. Winter.*

**25700. London Program: Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales.** (=ENGL 20105) *PQ: Enrollment in London Program.* For course description, see English Language and Literature. *C. von Nolcken. Autumn.*

**25702. Nineteenth-Century European Political Thought: Hegel and Marx.** (=PLSC 24000) For course description, see Political Science. *P. Markell. Winter.*

**\*26201. The Brothers Karamazov.** (=HUMA 23300, RUSS 24300) *PQ: Required of new Fundamentals majors; open to others with consent of instructor. We*

read and interpret *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevsky. Among major themes are the nature of human guilt in relation to God and society; the problem of evil, and how the existence of evil in the world affects religious beliefs; the pros and cons of “freedom,” and what the word might have meant to Dostoevsky; and love. *S. Meredith. Winter, 2007.*

**26411. Law and Legislator: Exodus.** (=SCTH 33410) How does a people become a people? What defines it? What enables it to endure? By means of close reading and discussion of the book of Exodus, approached in a philosophical manner, this seminar will examine the formation of the Israelite nation, through the experiences of slavery, liberation, and the giving of the law. Special attention is given to the character of the constituting law and the character and activity of the legislator, as well as to the contrast between the way of the Israelites and the way of the Egyptians. *L. Kass. Spring, 2007.*

**26902. Moments of Happiness.** (=ISHU 29001, POLI 29000/39000) For course description, see Slavic Languages and Literatures (Polish). *B. Shallcross. Autumn, 2006.*

**27101. How Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot* Is Made.** (=CMLT 29300/39300, ENGL 28902/48902, RUSS 27801/37801) *Reading knowledge of French, Russian, and/or Spanish helpful but not required.* For course description, see Slavic Languages and Literatures (Russian). All work in English. *L. Steiner. Spring, 2007.*

**27600. Augustine’s *Confessions*.** (=GNDR 27601, HUMA 22700, RLST 25501) This course discusses Augustine’s representations of the self, of inquiry, and of the relation of language to truth. We discuss the literary and rhetorical form of the *Confessions*, while also examining Augustine’s psychology and theology. Text in English; students with knowledge of Latin should register for FNDL 24310. *W. Olmsted. Winter, 2008.*

**27611. Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* and St. Augustine on Memory and Time in *The Confessions*.** Wordsworth’s lengthy autobiographical poem contains his reflections upon the formation of an imaginative consciousness and his vocation as a poet. Like St. Augustine, these memories are captured from childhood, adolescence, formal education, love, and exposure to radical changes in his world. This course focuses mainly on the poetry, with corollary attention to St. Augustine’s position on memory and time in Books 10 and 11 of *The Confessions*. *B. Brown. Autumn, 2006.*

**27800. Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*.** (=CHSS 37901, PHIL 27500/37500) For course description, see Philosophy. *M. Forster. Winter.*

**28202. Introduction to the New Testament.** (=BIBL 32500, NTEC 21000/32500, RLST 12000) For course description, see Religious Studies. *M. Mitchell. Winter.*