

# Fundamentals Student Handbook

Academic Year 2016-17

## I Welcome to the Fundamentals Major!

You have joined an ambitious and talented cohort of students and faculty who are together invested in the careful and thoughtful consideration of several of history's greatest texts. This is a major dedicated study that is deeper than it is broad and that perhaps values wisdom more than academic convention. Students help to shape their own courses of study in conversation with a Fundamentals Faculty Adviser. There are many resources to help you, and we encourage you to refer to all of these individuals frequently.

- Faculty Adviser: assigned to each student
- Chair of Fundamentals: Malynne Sternstein
- Program Coordinator: John Ellison
- College Adviser: Charles Todd

For more information, you may also refer to the Fundamentals website:

<http://fundamentals.uchicago.edu>. Look here for an up-to-date course schedule, downloadable forms, and a departmental calendar of events.

In order that you can manage your time and anticipate your next steps, we have put together this calendar of major events in your Fundamentals life. You should look it over in its entirety after you are accepted to the program. Keep it and refer to it again each quarter. With regard to the particular graduation requirements for Fundamentals, please consult the College Course Catalogue.

We want particularly to encourage you to cultivate your relationship with your Faculty Adviser. The individuals in the department are excited to work with you. Their schedules can be very busy. You should expect to take responsibility for this relationship yourself. Ask for meetings when you want or need them, and don't be shy.

## II Program Outline

### A Second Year

#### 1 Autumn Quarter

Enroll in the first quarter of the Fundamentals Introductory Sequence.

If you do not already have fluency in a foreign language, begin/continue work in a foreign language. Remember that you will need to attain proficiency in a language at the 203 level and that you will be required to read at least one of your Fundamentals texts—either wholly or in significant part—in the language you choose. If you are having trouble picking a foreign language, you should speak to your Faculty Adviser and to the Program Coordinator.

Early in the quarter, there will be a reception for Fundamentals students and faculty. Look for the email announcement and please plan to attend. It will be a good opportunity to connect with advanced students and with faculty you've not yet met.

When you were admitted to the program you were assigned a Fundamentals Adviser. Though we hope you had a chance to meet this person after you joined the program last spring, it is quite possible that you have not yet met your adviser. Within the first seven weeks of this quarter, make an appointment to meet with your adviser (even if the two of you have already met). Be prepared to discuss your Fundamentals question and the kinds of texts you think might help you approach your question. How has your thinking changed since you applied to the program last spring? This is an introductory meeting. Try to become familiar with your adviser's research interests. Consider telling your adviser about other things you do, on or off campus, and other interests you find animating. Explain how your Fundamentals question relates to other interests and passions in your life. Discuss with your adviser the kind of relationship you would like to have with each other. How does your adviser understand his or her role? How would the adviser like to be contacted? How often will the two of you plan to be in touch? Note that you do not always have to have a specific question when you arrange to see your adviser. Sometimes it is nice just to check in, share what you are working on in your Fundamentals coursework, and discuss your developing interests.

## 2 Winter Quarter

Enroll in the second quarter of the Fundamentals Introductory Sequence. This can be any FNDL originating or cross-listed course. If you have questions, contact the Program Coordinator.

## 3 Spring Quarter

Enroll in a text course this quarter. Keep in mind that you will have to write a Junior Paper next year on a single text. You can only write about a text you have studied with a faculty member (which could include any texts covered in the Introductory Sequence). If you would like to write about anything in particular, you should take a course in the appropriate text this quarter or next Autumn.

Attend the Power of Books lecture, during third or fourth week.

After week six this quarter, meet with your faculty adviser to discuss your plans for the Junior Paper. You should begin to browse course listings, bookstores, and other resources to find ideas of the text you want to write about in your Junior Paper. Summer can be a time of exploration; you and your Faculty Adviser should discuss the range of texts you might look at.

All second-year students are also required to meet with their College Adviser (Charles Todd) before Week 8 of this quarter; get in touch with him and set up a meeting.

Attend our end-of-year picnic. Often the weather at this time of year recommends still an indoor event.

## B Third Year

### 1 Autumn Quarter

By the end of this year should plan to have taken at least four of your required text courses, two of your supporting courses, and your Junior Paper Writing course. Plan your academic schedule accordingly. (These are not rigid requirements, but general benchmarks.) Keep in mind that some text courses might be satisfied with Independent Study courses. If you are interested in Independent Study Courses, you should speak with your Faculty Adviser and the Program Coordinator. It is a good idea if you can arrange these well ahead of time. If you have not yet finished your language training, you should continue foreign language study.

Come to our Autumn reception!

The end of second week is the deadline to petition to write Junior Papers in the Spring Quarter. Be prepared that some petitions are not granted. Have a backup plan.

In the third or fourth week of this quarter, returning Fundamentals students each have a Review Conference. This is an occasion for you to consider again your Fundamentals question and the way it is has changed over the preceding year. It is also an opportunity for the faculty to check on your progress in the major, raise any concerns, recommend avenues of exploration, and simply to think with you about your question. You should not be particularly nervous about this meeting, but should prepare for it.

Before your Review Conference, you should:

- Complete the worksheet provided by the Fundamentals Program Coordinator. This will include some consideration of the text courses you intend to take over the course of the year.
- If time allows, meet with your faculty adviser to discuss again your Fundamentals question and the insights you may have gleaned from the preceding year's coursework. Discuss also your plans for the Junior Paper.
- Rewrite your Fundamentals question statement.

In fourth, fifth or sixth week, there will be an informational meeting about writing the Junior Paper. Please try to attend. At this meeting or before, you will receive a clear set of deadlines for the Junior Paper. Before the end of this quarter, you will be asked to have your JP proposal approved by your Junior Paper Adviser. This means that early this quarter you should determine the text for your Junior Paper and speak with the faculty member with whom you would like to work.

**A NOTE ABOUT THE JUNIOR PAPER:** The Junior Paper is an exercise in close reading and is usually about 20-25 pages long. It is a focused consideration of how a single text speaks to something related to your Fundamentals question. (Sometimes a student will elect to write a comparative paper using two texts. Permission to write on more than one text is determined by the student's adviser and the Fundamentals Chair.) As a program, we take this assignment quite seriously, as your opportunity for rigorous and leisurely consideration of a text. Naturally, it helps if you are excited about the text you write

about. Often it is an occasion for students to exercise their language skills or to write a paper relevant to possible graduate school interests. However, we understand this paper to be a writing exercise, the best example of the kind of work we hope you are doing in every Fundamentals course. Do not feel particular pressure to identify your favorite book; we do not require that this paper represent all of your passions and interests.

You are expected to work with a member of the Fundamentals faculty on the Junior Paper; a natural choice would be your faculty adviser, but this is not necessary if another member of the faculty taught the text you plan to write about.

Students should plan to write their papers in the Winter quarter of the Junior Year. Students may petition the Fundamentals Chair in writing for permission to write in the Spring quarter if they will be traveling abroad on a University Program in the Autumn or Winter or if the faculty member with whom they plan to work will not be in residence during the Winter. Petitions must be submitted before the end of second week the preceding Autumn.

All students in residence during the Winter, even those who have been granted permission to write in the Spring, will be expected to participate in the Junior Paper Writing Colloquium. The Colloquium meets every other week to workshop various aspects of your paper, develop your ideas, and provide a structure for meeting deadlines. Details regarding the Colloquium schedule will be made available before Winter registration the preceding quarter.

## 2 Winter Quarter

Enroll in the Junior Paper Independent Study (FNDL 29901). To do this, you should collect the requisite form from your college adviser, and it will need to be signed by either the Fundamentals Chair or the Program Coordinator before the end of third week. Participation in the Junior Paper Colloquium is a mandatory part of writing the Junior Paper.

Stay on top of deadlines this quarter! Ten weeks passes quickly.

All third-year students are also required to meet with their College Adviser (Charles Todd) before Week 8 of this quarter; get in touch with him and set up a meeting.

## 3 Spring Quarter

Of course, if you didn't write your Junior Paper last quarter, it needs to be done this quarter. Enroll in FNDL 29901 and follow the schedule provided by the Program Coordinator. This option is only available to students who successfully petitioned in the Autumn.

Attend the Power of Books lecture, during third or fourth week.

After week six this quarter, meet with your adviser to discuss your preparation for the senior exam. You won't take the exam until Spring Quarter of your senior year, but you should look ahead in the schedule and determine how you will satisfy your course requirements. This is also a good time to reflect a little on your Fundamentals major. What new questions have been opened to you? What would you like to accomplish in your major before the end of next year?

Attend the end-of-year picnic. Two years done!

## C Fourth Year

### 1 Autumn Quarter

All fourth-year students are required to meet with their College Adviser (Charles Todd) before Week 8 of this quarter. It's important to touch base with him; this year you need to finish taking text and supporting courses, and demonstrate language proficiency. Discuss your schedule with Charles or with the Fundamentals Program Coordinator if you have questions about any extant requirements.

Attend the Autumn reception, first or second week.

In the third or fourth week of this quarter, returning Fundamentals students each have a Review Conference. This is nearly identical to your previous conference, so you should know what to expect. You'll prepare in the same manner:

- Meet with your faculty adviser to discuss again your Fundamentals question and the insights you may have gleaned from the preceding year's coursework. Discuss your remaining coursework and how you might now think about your Fundamentals question in relation to all of the texts you have studied.
- Complete the worksheet provided by the Fundamentals Program Coordinator.
- Rewrite your Fundamentals question statement.

### 2 Winter Quarter

Toward the end of the quarter we will have a meeting about how to prepare for the Senior Exam. Please attend. At this meeting or shortly afterward, you will be asked to provide a list of the **six texts** you would like to study for your exam. In your list indicate with whom you studied the text, the course name, and the quarter taken. Remember that your foreign language text must be among the six, and that you may include any of the texts studied in your introductory sequence. Very rarely, you may be asked to reconsider your list; this is most likely to happen if we don't think we could identify two readers with sufficient familiarity with one of your chosen texts. Naturally, we do our best to support any course that was offered with a FNDL course number.

You will be asked to revise your Fundamentals Question Statement one more time in preparation for the exam. This last draft of your Statement should reference your six texts and the way each informs your thinking about your question. This Statement will be shared with faculty members who are asked to compose your exam questions. Expect to submit this document to the Program Coordinator before the end of first week Spring quarter.

This is a good time to make sure that the office has a record of your completing the foreign language requirement.

**A NOTE ABOUT THE SENIOR EXAM:** This exam marks the culmination of your work in Fundamentals. It is your opportunity to consider your Fundamentals questions with reference to each of the texts you have studied. Inasmuch as the texts you have studied

truly are great books, there will be much still to explore in them. However, your exam should demonstrate some facility, even mastery. By enrolling in an Independent Study, you will carve out significant time to prepare for your exam. You should guard this time, attend carefully to the materials, and consider working with your peers in preparation.

### 3 Spring Quarter

Enroll in the Senior Exam Independent Study (FNDL 29902). To do this, you should collect the requisite form from your college adviser, and it will need to be signed by either the Program Chair or the Program Coordinator before the end of third week.

First week of this quarter is the last time that you will be asked to submit a final formulation of your Fundamentals question, the version that will be shown to your examiners.

Attend the Power of Books lecture, third or fourth week.

End of **sixth week**, pick up your exam after 9:00am. You will have until mid-afternoon on Monday to answer two questions. Each answer is usually 8–10 pages long. You may, of course, refer to any texts and notes in your writing. Contact the Program Coordinator with any questions.

Sometime after you have finished your exam, meet one last time with your faculty adviser to discuss the program and your experience. Exams will be evaluated before the end of ninth week. After your readers have been identified, you are encouraged to speak with them about your performance.

Come and celebrate at our end-of-year picnic;

**Congratulations!**

**Go and do great things, and don't stop reading.**

## III Fundamentals Check List

An easy way to keep on track with what you need to do for any particular quarter is to go to <http://fundamentals.uchicago.edu/page/timelines>, which has the general yearly outline for the program (listed below) as well as a more in-depth timeline for the Junior Paper and the Senior Exam. *Please plan ahead!* Things like study abroad, work commitments, or other conflicts of course come up, but keep this schedule in your minds (and on your calendars) as you make your plans and keep complications to a minimum.

### A Autumn Quarter

- Week 1–2: Welcome-back reception
- Weeks 2–3: Review Conferences for students in their 3rd/4th year
- Week 6: Junior Paper orientation
- Before Week 8: 4th-years must meet with adviser

### B Winter Quarter

- Week 4: Fundamentals faculty lunch
- Week 7: Senior Exam orientation
- Before Week 8: 3rd-years must meet with adviser

### C Spring Quarter

- Week 2: Junior Papers due
- Week 3: Power of Books colloquium
- Week 5: Fundamentals applications due
- Week 6–7: Senior exams administered over the weekend
- Week 7: Results of admissions announced
- Before Week 8: 2nd-years must meet with adviser
- Week 9: Memorial Day picnic

## IV Frequently Asked Questions

### A Do all courses with the FNDL designation count as text/author courses?

Most courses offered with the FNDL designation count as text/author courses, but there are just a few exceptions each year. The exceptions, usually taught by members of the Fundamentals faculty, should be fairly obvious in their failure to address just one or two authors or texts. An example is FNDL 23312: Memory, Commemoration, and Mourning, taught by Bertram Cohler and Peter Homans. Courses like this are often included because they are likely to work for many students as supporting courses and because the faculty are familiar with the Fundamentals program. If you have any questions about whether a specific course will count as a text/author course, consult the Program Coordinator.

### B Help me understand supporting courses.

You are required to take four supporting courses to satisfy the major requirements. Those courses that satisfy the requirement are determined primarily by the question and texts you choose to study. They may be taken in any department in the University, but you should be prepared to explain their relevance to your particular course of study. Charles Todd will require that you identify your supporting courses for him at regular meetings. You are also asked to list your progress in the major, including your supporting courses, in preparation for Review Conferences in the Fall Quarters of your Junior and Senior years. You may be asked to explain your choices at those conferences.

### C How and when should I sign up for an Independent Reading Course?

There is no requirement ever to take an Independent Reading Course. In some instances, however, reading courses can be exciting elements in your work in Fundamentals. They are opportunities for a single student or a small group of students to study with a faculty member a text that is not offered in the course catalog. If there is a particular text that seems important to your Fundamentals question or one that you are particularly excited to read as part of your program, it might make sense to arrange a reading course. You should discuss your interest with your faculty adviser and with the Fundamentals Program Coordinator. They can help you determine whether a reading course is a good idea and brainstorm faculty members who might be interested and willing to do the course with you.

When you decide that you would like to arrange a reading course:

- It might make sense to determine whether you know anyone else who might like to participate. Often it can be more compelling to a professor if there are multiple students interested to read a text together, and the support of peers can be helpful in a course that is less structured than most of your courses.
- Find a faculty member who is willing to direct the course. Have a meeting with that professor and determine pragmatic details: What exactly will you read? How often will you meet? What will be the requirements to receive credit? Some professors will



recommend that you put these expectations in writing; even if your professor doesn't ask for this, you should consider writing it out and confirming your expectations.

- When you are comfortable with the details, visit Charles Todd to collect an Independent Reading and Research Form.
- Sign up for FNDL 29900. Note: you will receive a letter grade for this course.
- You will need the signatures of the professor teaching the course and of the Fundamentals Chair. The Program Coordinator can usually sign in lieu of the Chair.
- Submit this document to the registrar before the end of the third week of the quarter.

There are two required courses for which you will have to go through this process. When you write the Junior Paper, you will register for FNDL 29901; the quarter you take your Senior Exam, you will register for FNDL 29902. In both these cases, you should list the faculty supervisor of the course as Malynne Sternstein. You will, of course, continue to work with your particular faculty advisers for these projects, but your passing grade will be assigned by the department.

## **D I'm confused about the language requirement. How do I fulfill it?**

Close reading requires careful attention to language. Students are required to study at least one text composed originally in a language other than English and to demonstrate competency in that language. First, a student must complete coursework or test out of the 203 level of a language offered at the University. Second, a student must use the language to read carefully one of the texts that will appear on the Senior Exam list and write a paper about that text. This second part of the requirement may be demonstrated in one of several ways.

1. The student may study the text in a course conducted in the original language of the text or in which the text is read in its original language.
2. The student may write a course paper or Junior Paper in which substantive analysis or translation demonstrates competency in the original language. In addition, of course, to turning this in to the instructor or Junior Paper readers, a copy of this paper should be submitted to the Fundamentals Office and included in the student's file. *In this case, one of the evaluators of the paper must know the relevant language and signing the Fundamentals Language Requirement Form to certify that the paper demonstrates the student's competency.*
3. The student may arrange to take a sight-reading exam with the relevant text. In this case, the student would arrange with a faculty member fluent in the language to prepare a couple reasonable portions of the text. In an interview context, the professor would then ask the student to translate one of those portions and to briefly discuss the reading. What constitutes competency of an appropriate level is determined by the discretion of the examiner. *The Examiner must sign the Language Requirement form, which can be downloaded at the Fundamentals website.* The signed form should be submitted to the Program Coordinator. We try to avoid using this method to satisfy the requirement, because it doesn't clearly satisfy the department's interest that the student read – in the context of a course – a foreign language text in its original language. If you are inclining to satisfy your requirement in this way, please arrange to speak with the Program Coordinator.

4. As the achievement of proficiency may differ vis-à-vis length of study from language to language, it may prove harder for students of some languages to read a text in its entirety even after completing two years of instruction. Any students who believe that their language is so difficult that doing so is unrealistic may petition to have the requirement met by reading a clearly marked-out portion of the text—perhaps a chapter or two, or series of smaller sections. To be considered, the petition must set out a clear plan and must be signed by the instructor of the text in question.

## E Can I double major?

It is certainly possible to double major with Fundamentals and not uncommon. Naturally, we want to encourage you to focus your attention on your work in Fundamentals and will often discourage students from double majoring. It might be difficult to study for your Senior Exam while also writing a BA Thesis in another department. Sometimes meeting the requirements of multiple departments can unduly constrain your scheduling options and set up a kind of adversarial relationship between your majors. Most research suggests that you gain very little advantage—if any—in the job market or graduate school applications to list a double major on your transcript. Of course, sometimes double-majoring enables you to explore two very complementary courses of study or allows you to pursue different interests.

There is sometimes a secondary question about when coursework can apply to more than one major. In the case of a minor, courses may not apply to both a student's major and to a minor. In the case of majors, however, the college's current policy is only that a department may determine which courses apply towards its own requirements. A department cannot exclude another department from accepting the same course to satisfy other requirements.

Then there is a question about whether one can write the same paper as a Junior Paper and as a BA Thesis for another department. Most simply, the answer is no. Usually, this is true for pragmatic reasons. The Fundamentals Junior Paper is written in a different quarter, is usually a different length, and is usually less concerned with research, theory, and critical apparatus than theses written for other departments. One may, however, write a Junior Paper in Fundamentals that prepares the student for further work that might be taken up in a subsequent research project. In a situation like this, a student may not cut and paste portions of the Junior Paper into the subsequent thesis, but we shouldn't be surprised to find similar ideas emerge among two related projects. The student should discuss the incorporation of previous work with her thesis adviser.

