Courses

1.16 Required Number of Courses and Distribution: Eighteen courses are required for the PhD degree. Usually students take 3 per quarter, which typically constitutes full-time enrollment. In the first year, students take Art History Proseminar (ARTH 40200) and the COSI Objects and Materials Seminar (ARTH 44002). In the second year, students enroll in two qualifying paper courses and one reading course with their advisor to begin study for their preliminary exams. In total, a maximum of 8 of the 18 courses may be taken outside the Art History Department.

Students must define a minor field, in which they take at least 2 courses. Students must also meet a distribution requirement by taking 2 courses outside of their primary field (these must be selected in consultation with the advisor). One of the courses in the minor field may also count toward the distribution requirement.

1.17 Art History Proseminar (ARTH 40200): How do we do art history? What is it? What are its premises and where does it come from? This seminar will explore the historical foundations, formulations and applications of current art historical methods, as well as the foundations of the art historical discipline as it emerged from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Both theory and practice will be considered through select texts, with special focus on art history as a distinct scholarly discipline today.

1.18 COSI Objects & Materials seminar (ARTH 44002): Team-taught between Northwestern, the Art Institute of Chicago and University of Chicago, this course focuses on sustained, close engagement with art objects in the AIC collection and the methods and questions such inquiry raises. Students will be introduced to basic techniques of stylistic and scientific analysis as well as recent theoretical debates that resituate art history as a study of physical things as well as their disembodied images. Required for all first-year art history graduate students.

1.19 Types of Courses within the Department: The Department offers several types of courses: lectures and introductory seminars (which have ARTH 300 numbers); advanced seminars (ARTH 40000 and above); and graduate independent research courses (ARTH 49800). Most courses in the department do not require faculty permission for registration, but you should make arrangements with the specific faculty member before you register for an independent study course with him or her.

Lecture courses and introductory seminars may include advanced undergraduates and are ordinarily combinations of lecture and discussion. Often they cover a larger body of material in a more survey-like fashion than do advanced seminars. Requirements in lecture courses and introductory seminars vary widely from one faculty member to another and may include papers and/or exams. Advanced seminar courses are more intense, research-oriented classes. Students typically make seminar presentations and write in-depth papers for these classes. Some graduate seminars rely heavily on non-English language reading and research, so be sure of the requirements before you enroll.

Most students balance their workload between 300- and 400-level courses during each quarter. There is no requirement regarding the number of 300- or 400-level courses that must be counted toward the 18 courses needed for the PhD degree, but it is expected that you will want to take at least one 400-level course each quarter so as to develop the skills in critical analysis, independent research, group discussion, and public presentation that this format encourages.

1.20 Two-Quarter Course Sequences: Among the course offerings, students will occasionally find pairs of linked courses offered sequentially over two quarters. There may be one or more such sequences per year in each field. These paired courses enable a student to do more sustained work in a particular area than the quarter system generally permits, and are a valuable way to develop research paper skills and expertise. Students may take the first course alone, but may not take the second course without the first.

1.21 Research Courses: These courses are “independent studies” and will vary widely in format and requirements depending on the individual faculty and student. At the beginning, you should establish with the faculty member how often and when you will meet, what materials you will cover and how they are to be covered (joint discussion, written report, etc.) and what you will be expected to produce by the end of the quarter (a paper, annotated bibliography, etc.). Students may only take two of these independent study courses in addition to the OP and prelims reading courses.

1.22 Courses Outside of the Department: Because 8 courses may be taken outside the Department, you’re encouraged to investigate the offerings in history, literature, religion, anthropology, music, philosophy, and other disciplines that might complement your art historical studies. Other departments often have descriptions of courses like the ones prepared by our Department. Visit their website for this information, or check the University’s Time Schedules website. You may also want to consider taking courses at other area universities. See 1.24 for more information.

Note that DoVA courses must be graduate-level (300) in order to count among the 18 degree courses.

1.23 Taking or Auditing Additional Courses: Eighteen is the typical and minimum number of courses required for the PhD. You and your advisor may decide that you should enroll in more courses during your second or third year, or that you should audit courses of special relevance to your dissertation work.

Students are encouraged to officially audit a survey course in their primary field, registering for the course for audit or “R” credit. Auditing or serving as a course assistant in a particular survey is a prerequisite for subsequently teaching a version of that survey as a lecturer in the Department. While auditing a survey, students may wish to take an independent study course to enlarge their knowledge of the material.

1.24 Courses outside the University: In choosing courses, you may wish to consider supplementing the University offerings through study at other Chicago-area graduate colleges and universities, such as Northwestern University. Contact UChicagoGRAD for information on how to register for courses at other schools. Be aware that university calendars do not always coincide and that registration deadlines may be earlier than ours.
1.25 Advanced Studies Course: Students taking fewer than three courses per quarter or who have completed coursework are automatically enrolled in an “Advanced Studies” course (ARTH 70000) each quarter. These courses are graded “satisfactory” (S) or “unsatisfactory” (U) or “unofficial withdrawal” (UW) by the Director of Graduate Studies on the basis of the annual spring progress review. Students who receive a grade of “U” will be placed on academic probation; the DGS will explain what they need to do to recover good academic standing. If a student does not meet those expectations, the faculty will determine whether the student should withdraw from the program. A grade of “UW” is assigned if a student’s faculty advisor tells the Director of Graduate Studies that the student has lost contact with the advisor or ceased working on the dissertation but has not officially withdrawn from the program. In such cases, the Dean of Students office follows up with the student to determine the circumstances.

This course will show up on students’ transcripts and is used by the Student Loan Administration to make sure students are eligible for federal loans. More information on the Humanities Division’s enrollment and satisfactory academic progress policy can be found here: https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/registration.