

University of Chicago Social Sciences Collegiate Division

The distinguished American sociologist, David Riesman, who played a major role in the creation of the general education program in the social sciences at Chicago, once observed that it was only with a “marvelous hubris” that students were encouraged to range over such “large territory” in the social sciences. Indeed, since the 1940s, year-long sequences designed to introduce students to different types of social scientific data and different forms of social sciences inquiry have become a permanent feature of the Chicago curriculum. Although considerable variety manifests itself in the way the social sciences courses in general education are organized, most of the sequences are informed, as Robert Redfield once suggested, by an attempt “to communicate the historical development of contemporary society” and by an effort “to convey some understanding of the scientific spirit as applied to social problems and the capacity to address oneself in that spirit to such a problem.” By training students in the analysis of social phenomena through the development and use of interdisciplinary and comparative concepts, the courses also try to determine the characteristics common among many societies, thus enabling the individual to use both reason and special knowledge to confront rapid social change in the global world of the late twentieth century. The Social Sciences Collegiate Division offers several social science and civilization sequences in the general education program.

Courses: Social Sciences (SOSC)

General Education Sequences

11100-11200-11300. Power, Identity, and Resistance. *PQ: Must be taken in sequence.*
G. Herrigel, Staff. Autumn, Winter, Spring.

11100. This quarter looks at the relationship between the economy and power in the age of Capitalism. It examines topics such as the nature of economic process, the logic of the division of labor, the prevalence and character of exploitation in economic relationships, and the scope for political intervention in the economy. Also considered are the roles of values and culture in economic process, as well as the historical and cultural variability of the boundaries between the economy, society, and politics. Readings include classic works in modern political economy and its critique by Adam Smith, Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim.

11200. *PQ: SOSC 11100.* The focus of this quarter is on the relationship between politics and power in the modern age. The course begins by investigating the classical liberal emphasis on individuals and individualism, and its distinct understanding of government as a contract and of the role of the political in maintaining order and protecting the rights of its citizens. The course then considers criticisms of the liberal conception coming from both the left and the right. Questions of equality, liberty, rights, identity, boundary, order, and history preoccupy us. Readings include texts by Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Burke, Wollstonecraft, Mill, Nietzsche, Schmitt, and Gandhi.

11300. *PQ: SOSC 11200.* Spring Quarter analyzes the way in which the themes of the first two quarters worked themselves out in the history of the twentieth century. The course begins by examining debates about revolution and reform, national socialism, and the viability of democracy. The middle of the course examines debates about the nature of modern capitalism and the possibility of reforming it. Themes here are the emergence of the welfare state and the changing character of opposition in the middle of the century. The final part of the course considers the emergence of identity politics and the growing importance of human rights in oppositional discourse at century’s end. Readings include Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Gentile, Hayek, Polanyi, Marcuse, Foucault, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X.

12100-12200-12300. Self, Culture, and Society. *PQ: Must be taken in sequence.*
M. Postone, B. Cohler, W. Sewell, Staff. Autumn, Winter, Spring.

12100. In this quarter we explore the nature and development of modern society through an examination of theories of capitalism. The classic social theories of Smith, Marx, and Weber, along with contemporary ethnographic and historical works, serve as points of departure for considering the characterizing features of the modern world, with particular emphasis on its social-economic structure and issues of work, the texture of time, and economic globalization.

12200. *PQ: SOSC 12100.* In this quarter we focus on the relation of culture, social life, and history. On the basis of readings from Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss, Sahlins, Foucault, Benjamin, Adorno, and other anthropologists and cultural theorists, we investigate how systems of meaning expressed through metaphors, symbols, rituals, and narratives constitute and articulate individual and social experience across a range of societies, including our own, and how those systems of meaning change historically.

12300. *PQ: SOSC 12200.* In this quarter we concern ourselves with the question of how personhood is constructed socially, culturally, and historically. Our considerations include issues of gender, sexuality, and ethnic identity, through the study of the wide range of approaches found in the works of Freud, Goffman, Vygotsky, de Beauvoir, Fanon, and others.