

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND URBAN STUDIES (ENST)**  
**3<sup>RD</sup> YEAR BA THESIS / CAPSTONE**  
**INFORMATION SESSION**

**Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization (CEGU)**  
**February 8, 2023**

# AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. Options: Capstone or Thesis
3. BA Capstone
4. BA Thesis
5. IRB Information
6. Symposium, Grants and Prizes
7. Chicago Studies
8. Timeline for Third-Year Students
9. Q&A
10. Chat with Capstone and Thesis Students

# OPTIONS: CAPSTONE OR THESIS

All students majoring in ENST will complete either a **BA Thesis** or **BA Capstone** in their 4th year.

Students can complete either the thesis or capstone. but the **BA Thesis** is required for honors in the major.

# **BA CAPSTONE**

The BA Capstone is completed within the framework of a designated course taken in their 4th year.

This option allows for structured creativity using skills developed throughout the major program, culminating in an engaged project showcasing knowledge and experience in environmental and urban studies.

Capstone projects will be presented in the Spring BA symposium

# **BA CAPSTONE COURSES**

## **(only a selection!)**

- Writing the City (Carver)
- U.S. Environmental Policy (Lodato)
- Environmental Justice in Principle and Practice (Lodato)
- Chicago Neighborhoods (Talen)
- Spatial Cognition (Bae)
- Urban Design with Nature (Talen and Shaikh)
- Changing America in the Last 100 Years (Conzen)
- City Imagined, City Observed (Joyner)
- Big Problems: People in Motion (Carver and Joyner)
- Water: Economics, Policy, and Society (Shaikh)
- Mapping Global Chicago (Maidhof)
- Chicago's Urban Morphology (Conzen)

# BA THESIS

- **An extended piece of research** (40–60 page paper), conducted **independently** by students under faculty advisement;
- **Supported by evidence**, whether quantitative or qualitative, gathered from publicly available sources or generated through data collection;
- **Guided by a question** that is narrow enough to be fully addressed in a year, yet expansive enough to have broader scholarly relevance;
- **Supervised by faculty** with whom students establish shared expectations and work closely throughout the year.

# BA THESIS PROCESS

- Attend the **thesis brainstorm on February 15<sup>th</sup>** to begin identifying a topic, developing a research question, and identifying an evidence base.
- Attend the **BA thesis alumni panel on February 24<sup>th</sup>**
- Meet with a preceptor (Kristi or Xixi) and possible faculty advisors
- **Submit the [thesis application](#) by March 31<sup>st</sup>**
- Thesis activities continue in Spring quarter for those accepted into the thesis program. See the [thesis page](#) for activities and dates

## 4<sup>th</sup> year:

- **Enroll in the two-quarter BA colloquium in 4th year**
- **Continuous one-on-one advising** throughout the year to anticipate each stage of the thesis and receive feedback along the way.

# BA THESIS

## SAMPLE AREAS OF FOCUS

- **Climate change** as a problem of governance, political economy, eco/socio/biodiversity, and ethical reasoning/action
- **Food and farming**, including cultures and conflicts
- **Transportation and mobility**, its living legacies and coming transformations
- **Sustainability practices**, their possibilities, promises, and pitfalls
- **Community engagement** with environmental change, from urban sustainability to digital activism
- **Energy** cultures, histories and geographies
- **Chicago** as an archive and field site to study questions about the environment and urbanization processes



# SAMPLE THESES

*Chicago Studies Prize Authors: February 10<sup>th</sup>*

*ENST Alumni Panel: February 24<sup>th</sup>*

**Ruby Rorty AB' 22**

[Is There a Legal Path to Environmental Justice? Movement-building, strategic litigation, and a case study of Chicago's General Iron dispute](#)

**Sindu Soundararajan BA'22**

[Structured, Scalable, and Just: Evaluating the Implementation of the Isle de Jean Charles Resettlement Project through Risk-Mitigation Strategies](#)

**Marc Loeb BA'21**

[Building a Selective Permeability of Space: Urban Renewal and The University of Chicago Campus Shuttle System](#)

**Sam Joyce'20**

[Renters, Buildings and Scale: A Spatial Analysis of Urban Tree Cover in Chicago](#)

**Yuna Song BA'19**

[Transforming the Fashion Industry through Millennials: An Analysis of Millennials' Consumer Behavior in Relation to Sustainable Fashion](#)

# Research with Human Subjects Requires Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

IRB contacts, trainings, and resource links

- [Social & Behavioral Sciences IRB Office](#)
- [AURA IRB \(Application\)](#)
- [Templates | Social & Behavioral Sciences IRB Office](#)
- Contact the SBS IRB Office at [sbs-irb@uchicago.edu](mailto:sbs-irb@uchicago.edu)

# SYMPOSIUM, GRANTS AND PRIZES

- All students will present at the BA Thesis and Capstone symposium in Spring of their 4<sup>th</sup> year.
- This year's symposium will be held on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023
- There are research grants and prizes for undergraduate research.
  - CEGU grants and prizes will be announced in the next few weeks.
  - A full list of opportunities across the College will be added to our website shortly.
  - [Chicago Studies Undergraduate Research Prize](#)



## CHICAGO STUDIES

- **Research Workshops** exploring Chicago topics, archives, datasets, and more (see <http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/events>)
- **Chicago “Thesis Universe”** visualization to identify advisors and research mentors on campus, as well as access previous undergraduate research on the city (see [/research](#))
- **One-on-one advising** to help you identify additional resources or navigate collaborative projects in the city (see [/people](#))
- **Weekly writing days** (“Writing Wednesdays”) complete with sugar *and* caffeine...and walk-in Chicago research advising
- **Chicago Research Colloquium**, undergraduate research prize, *Chicago Studies Annual*, and collection on [Knowledge@UChicago](#).

# THIRD YEAR, WINTER AND SPRING QUARTER DEADLINES

<b>Winter Quarter</b>	<u>Seventh Week:</u> 2/15, Wednesday 12pm	BA Thesis Brainstorm Session with CEGU Research Mentors Room 129, 1155 E. 60th St.
	<u>Eighth Week:</u> 2/24, Friday, 12:30-1:30pm	BA Thesis Chat with Alumni Panel Room 129, 1155 E. 60th St.
<b>Spring Quarter</b>	<u>Second Week:</u> 3/31, Friday	<b>*Due:</b> <a href="#"><u>Faculty-approved BA Thesis Application*</u></a>
	<u>Fourth Week:</u> 4/14, Friday	Students are notified whether they are approved to proceed with the BA Thesis
	<u>Seventh Week:</u> 5/3, Wednesday, 5pm	BA Thesis Workshop led by CEGU Research Mentors
	<u>By the end of Finals Week:</u> 6/2, Friday	<b>Due:</b> BA Thesis reading list, plan, and timeline for review by CEGU research mentors and faculty advisor

# CONTACT INFORMATION

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# RELEVANT LINKS

- [ENST Major/Minor page](#)
- [BA Thesis/Capstone page](#)
- [Office Hours](#)
- [About IRB](#) and [info slides](#)
- [About CS Undergraduate Research Prize](#)
- [Recent Thesis Examples](#)

**QUESTIONS?**